



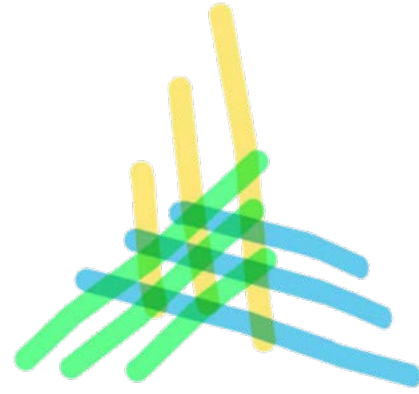
Our Park/ Southwark

A case study of socially engaged art practice
and collaborative design for a more just future

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program's
Restored Spaces Initiative

Our Park/ Southwark

**A case study of socially engaged art practice
and collaborative design for a more just future**



Acknowledgments

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Top Center:

Our Park/Southwark logo designed by Mateo Fernández-Muro and Gamar Markarian.



Our Park/Southwark Project Credits

A Mural Arts Restored Spaces Initiative and The Trust for Public Land Green Schoolyard

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MURAL COLLABORATORS: the Weaving Culture mural was created by lead artist James Dunn and assistant artists Carolina Gomez and Samantha Kovnat.

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Why this Case Study?

Our Park/Southwark, a 2017-2019 community-led redesign of Southwark's outdoor spaces instigated by community members and coordinated by Mural Arts Philadelphia's Restored Spaces Initiative in partnership with The Trust for Public Land, provided a platform where the community co-designed beauty and meaning through collective thinking and collaborative artistic practices. Neighborhood residents articulated the need for open green space where people could share skills and knowledge in South Philadelphia and identified Southwark School as a potential site for transformation during their participation in the 2015 CohStra project, *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge*. This participatory research and planning project

convened open-air design charrettes in a public design studio created in a cleaned-up vacant lot. *Playgrounds* offered "a venue to share collective and individual knowledge produced in an area marked as much by its diversity as by the cultural distance and lack of communication between the populations that inhabit it."¹ *Our Park/Southwark* implemented strategies to promote equity, community leadership, and horizontal collaboration across cultural divides, specifically playing games, hiring community members,

¹ Cohabitation Strategies. "Reflections on *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge: An Action-Research Project on South Philadelphia*." CohStra.org. http://www.playgrounds.restoredspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/BOOKLET_Finforweb2.pdf

designing and building together, and prioritizing time and resources for collective processes of work and relaxed connection. Unlike typical public art projects in which process and content are dictated by sponsoring organizations, the project's promotion of horizontal collaboration, shared decision-making, and collective creativity subverted white supremacist values such as prioritizing time efficiency over group capacity building, or paternalistic decision-making for the group by those in positions of power,² and its participants voiced deep appreciation of the project and their part in it. This case study attempts to examine and evaluate the numerous strategies that, together, catalysed an unprecedented degree of community investment and involvement in the project. Our hope is that future Restored Spaces Initiative projects as well as other social practitioners and organizations can test the recipe of strategies used at *Our Park/Southwark* to determine whether this was a magical fluke, or if this particular combination of strategies holds power and can be replicated. If the recipe is replicable, our aspiration is for these strategies to "scale rhizomatically,"³ connecting with like-minded projects and practitioners online and through

² Jones, Kenneth and Okun, Tema. "White Supremacy Culture," p.28, from *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, created by dRworks, www.dismantlingracism.org.ResourceGeneration. <https://resourcegeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-dRworks-workbook.pdf>

³ From "Caring." Conversation by Helena Reckitt and Elke Krasny, part of New Alphabet School virtual event June 2020. *HKW/New Alphabet School*. https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2019/new_alphabet_school/texte_new_alphabet_school/new_alphabet_school_caring.php

word of mouth, becoming one node in a planetary network of projects sharing methods, vocabulary, learning, and inspiration to generate positive change on a scale much greater than each individual organization or social practitioner could achieve alone. By offering this case study as a free PDF we aim to share its discoveries and ideas for use by interested social-practice artists and environmental justice activists.

Restored Spaces Initiative is a program of the environmental justice Department at Mural Arts Philadelphia. Since 2008 it has been sponsoring projects that operate at the intersection of environmental justice and social practice art to involve communities in generating positive, mutually beneficial change according to their own priorities and expertise. Restored Spaces espouses the following goals in all of its projects:

- Environmental and Climate Justice
- Community Capacity Building
- Equity and Horizontal Collaborations
- Care and Re-knitting Social Fabric

In an effort to rectify and activate around Environmental Justice issues, Restored Spaces facilitates projects that come directly from communities, centering their visions, expertise, and knowledge. Environmental hazards disproportionately affect marginalized communities, especially communities of color. To imagine and practice a more just future, projects must prioritize dismantling the systems that maintain these disparities and build relational networks, both in their goals and in their practice.

"We hold important that each of us needs to be critical thinkers, good decision makers, and give principled leadership... (We) change ourselves to change the world... and among other things, move from individualism to collectivism." -William Goldsby, *Reconstructing Rage*

Top Left: Study of a weave for the *Weaving Culture* mural design by artist James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School.

In undertaking its four overarching goals at *Our Park/Southwark*, Restored Spaces followed the insight of curator Lucia Sanroman:

“Projects that make foundational improvements to the urban fabric must emerge from the communities themselves and grow directly out of the community’s priorities, using grassroots research and exploratory cultural experiences to engage people’s stories, interests, and challenges rather than responding to policy and institutional priorities.” - paraphrased from Lucia Sanroman, curator

Right:
Weaving Culture © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts’ Art Education program at Furness High School; *Our Park* © 2018 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Basurama Collective, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.
Photo by Steve Weinik.

Following Pages, p. 8 and p. 9

Left:
Southwark School’s south facade and playground prior to transformation, juxtaposed with words describing the school generated during the Treasure Hunt game played by Southwark community.
Photo by Steve Weinik.

Right:
Collage of the world map indicating the countries of origin of families at Southwark School, by artist James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts’ Art Education program at Furness High School.





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Project Brief and Goals

Shari Hersh, director of the Respored Spaces Initiative at Mural Arts, based the *Our Park* project at Southwark School on the community's stated needs for green space and community space for people to gather with their families and share their unique assets, skills, and resources for reciprocal benefit (called a "Hub Space"⁴). Through *Our Park/Southwark*, Restored Spaces aimed to engage people in grassroots, collaborative research and design using gameplay to imagine the space they wanted to create. Games convene people to share stories, interests, and problem-solving skills; create horizontal collaboration; build community capacity; and foster vibrant relational networks. Extensive resources such as time (both structured and informal), interpreters, and iterative design processes facilitated granular discussions and negotiations among participants, and developed the community's capacity to imagine the space they wanted and to design solutions to existing conditions.

Gameplay and employing Community Design Leaders were part of the evolution and testing of a more participatory process that strengthens social links and understands local aspirations and dreams. This community-led, process-based approach marks an evolution in the forms of participation and co-production historically deployed by Mural Arts. Advocated for by curator Lucia Sanroman, this newer approach ultimately allows for more sustained and resilient relationships between the Restored Spaces Initiative and the communities in which it works. Consistent with the goals of the previous Restored Spaces projects in the area, the team sought to acknowledge local cultures and values while also generating an environmentally low-impact meeting, learning, and playing space to engage in collective practices of self-recognition through knowledge exchange.⁵

4 Hersh, Shari. "From the Lens of Community Arts." Reflections on *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge*, p. 14-15. CohStra.org. http://www.playgrounds.restoredspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/BOOKLET_Finforweb2.pdf

5 Paraphrased from Cohabitation Strategies. "Envisioning *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge: Collective Learning, Knowledge, Ownership and Development*." CohStra.org. http://www.playgrounds.restoredspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ReportFINscreenview_small-part-3.pdf

Top Left and Top Right: Mural details. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.

Previous Pages, p. 10 and p. 11 Left: *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street. Photo by Steve Weinik.

Top Right: Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.

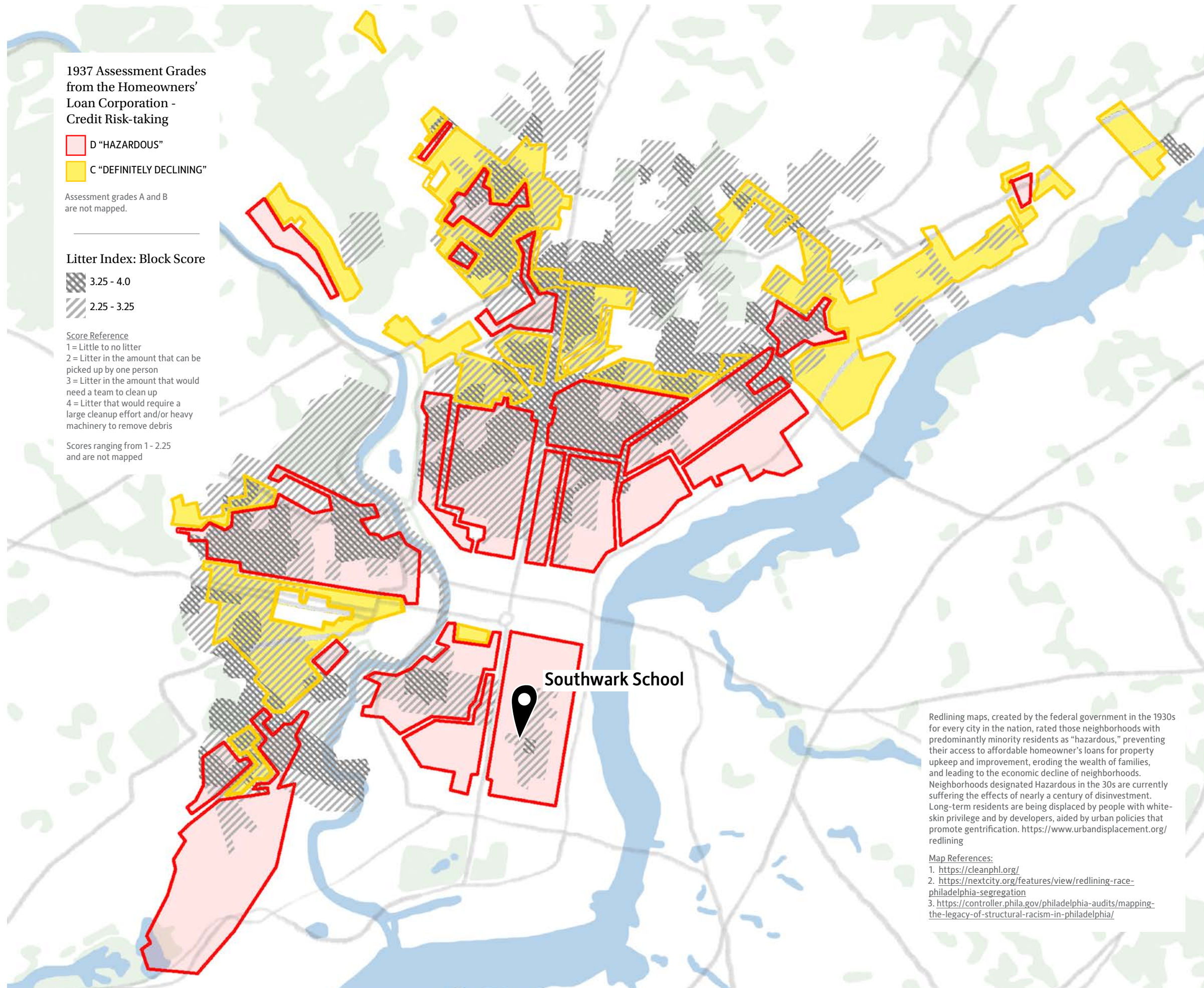
Project Collaboration

Students, teachers, parents, neighbors, artists, and designers co-created a colorful, sustainable, and green learning environment and community gathering space from a barren asphalt yard. This partnership between Mural Arts Philadelphia's Restored Spaces Initiative, led by Shari Hersh; Southwark School Principal Andrew Lukov, school staff members Ms. Spurka, Jeanine Hassan, and Joe Ulrich, and school volunteers; Community Design Leaders hired from the local community, including especially Sulay Sosa and Olga (last name withheld); The Trust for Public Land, led by Danielle Denk; design strategists Gamar Markarian and Mateo Fernández-Muro; muralist James Dunn; and Manuel Polanco Pérez-Llantada and Monica Gutiérrez Herrero of Basurama Collective, defined collaboration as an end, not just a means. The Community Schools Initiative, Friends of Southwark, Beth Dougherty and Sequoia Medley of the Education Committee and David Gana of the Beautification Committee of East Passyunk Crossing Civic Association (EPX),

Karisa Barlow of Bethanna (an ecumenical organization and the school's Community Umbrella Agency), were instrumental in disseminating outreach materials, and in developing the project's community engagement and its ability to surmount hurdles and achieve its goals. Scout LTD was invaluable in providing storage locations for repurposed materials. Each of these organizations brought its own nexus of tertiary partners that contributed to the park's creation. No one entity could have drawn together the richness of perspectives, skills, and resources that resulted in such an inclusive project. *Our Park* partnerships invigorated a network of environmental justice, urban design, public art, local government, and educational entities whose collaboration on future projects will continue to support people's Right to the City.

Hersh credits the extreme dedication and flexibility of these many partners who made the project possible, noting, "There was such a hunger for cooperation and connection in the divided community."





The Site and its Context

The Southwark neighborhood of South Philadelphia is a very diverse and vital community hosting immigrants from all over the world, and featuring lively street markets, farmers markets, and community gardens. A rich array of small civic and community organizations serves Southwark's diverse populations, which are often isolated from one another by language and cultural barriers. The CohStra brief mentions that the area's large concentration of vacant land; its medium-term vulnerability towards structured gentrification; the wide ethnic diversity of its inhabitants; and the large number of small civic organizations and economies operating in the area, are an immense depository of not-yet-unified useful knowledge.⁶ "A Mural Arts project can harness this multiplicity and provide a platform for equitable cultural representation of such diversity. ... Having more critical, alternative minority voices in the public realm can counter the cooptation of difference that often takes place in tandem with gentrification processes."⁷

Hersh had the opportunity to meet with many of the individuals representing community organizations in the area during *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge*, and facilitated their identification of potential sites for transformation. Community residents and representatives of local nonprofits identified Southwark School as one of four prime locations for transformation. The school community itself had identified the need for greening an exceptionally hot and barren outside space in an earlier planning process. Hersh engages the Restored Spaces Initiative in projects that have emerged from a community's own articulation of its needs.

Redlining maps, created by the federal government in the 1930s for every city in the nation, rated those neighborhoods with predominantly minority residents as "hazardous," preventing their access to affordable homeowner's loans for property upkeep and improvement, eroding the wealth of families, and leading to the economic decline of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods designated Hazardous in the 30s are currently suffering the effects of nearly a century of disinvestment. Long-term residents are being displaced by people with white-skin privilege and by developers, aided by urban policies that promote gentrification. <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/redlining>

Map References:

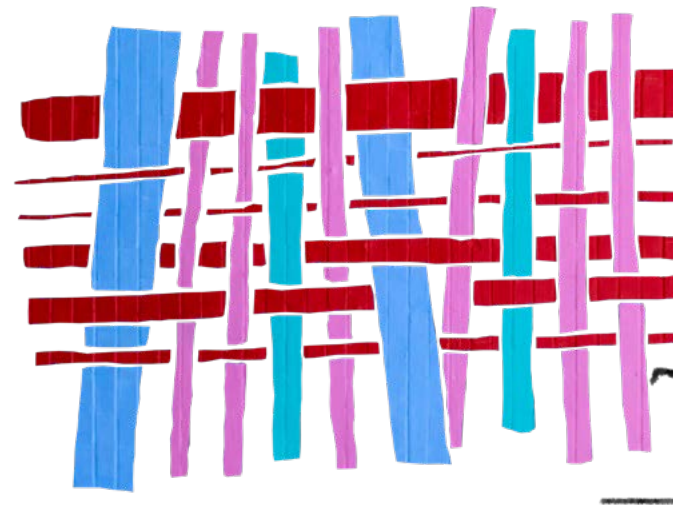
1. <https://cleanphl.org/>
2. <https://nextcity.org/features/view/redlining-race-philadelphia-segregation>
3. <https://controller.phila.gov/philadelphia-audits/mapping-the-legacy-of-structural-racism-in-philadelphia/>

⁶ Cohabitation Strategies, *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge: An Action-Research Project on South Philadelphia*. City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, 2015. Paraphrased from p.39 and 92.

⁷ Cohabitation Strategies. "Site Selection Parameters and the South Seven Area," p.50, section 12. *Playgrounds for Useful Knowledge: An Action-Research Project on South Philadelphia*. CohStra.org. http://www.playgrounds-restoredspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ReportFINscreenview_small-part-2.pdf

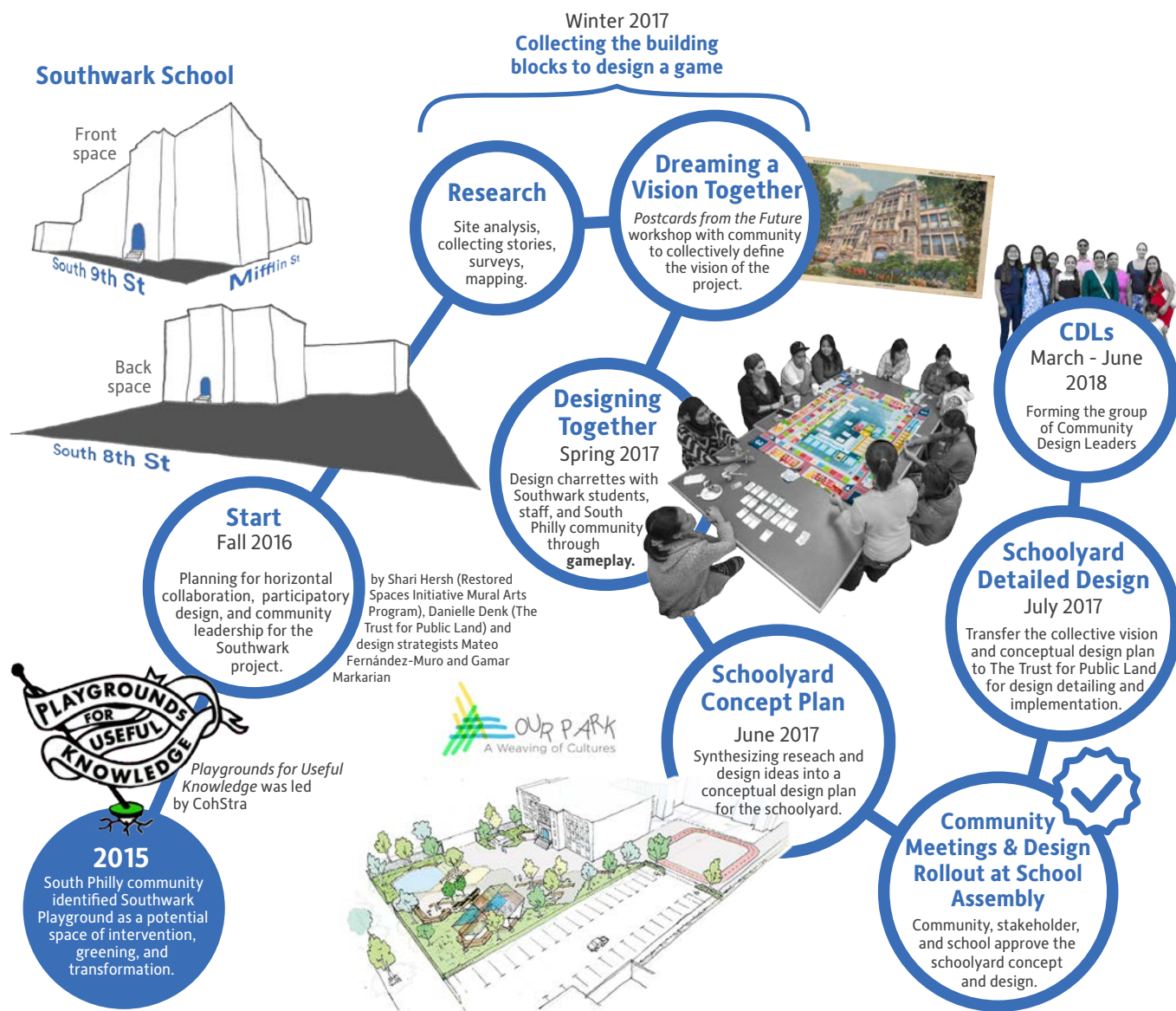


Our Park/Southwark dedication, October 4, 2018.
Photo by Steve Weinik.



Project Timeline

Top Left:
Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.



Art as Strategic Planning and Design



Design-Build



Glossary of Artistic Process

Collective Authorship:

Creativity is a communal rather than an individual endeavor, group ownership of the artwork is prioritized, and creative actions arise from the synergy of the group.

Community Capacity Building:

To use the project as a regenerative ingredient, “to recognize, build on and work to maximize the local area assets [and expertise] of individuals, families, organizations, and others to share and nurture an improved quality of life within that local area.”⁸ To deploy the resources sustaining the project for maximum benefit of local, social and economic capital.

Community Expertise:

Recognition that local residents possess skills, treasures of their own and familial experience, and the most accurate knowledge of their neighborhood’s features and realities. Local residents are best positioned to be decision makers with the experience to identify assets, foresee challenges, and devise workable solutions within their own community.

Community Hub: A physical location dedicated to creative projects and interactions, where community members can consistently experience a meeting of minds and a mutual outlet for their creativity for community benefit. The site becomes what Ray Oldenburg

defines as a Third Place, separate from home or workplace, where people gather to imagine, socialize, and discuss, fostering the core of civic engagement.⁹

Community Design Leader:

A member of the community serving as a paid citizen designer, exercising the power to transform their community and themselves,¹⁰ while gaining lifelong design and leadership skills. Community Design Leaders generate collective, mutually beneficial change aligned with their own priorities and expertise. Hired at the onset of the design process, they play an essential role in co-producing all phases of the project, participating intimately in generating and developing concepts and design, and building, making, painting, and conducting evaluation. They may or may not have an active or organizing role in the community outside of the project.

Complicating a topic: Using a variety of perspectives to deepen people’s understanding of the contexts, forces, and systems behind current conditions.

Creative Interventions:

Temporary art practices or installations that interrupt mindsets and provoke shifts in perspective. These can include gameplay, activities including drawing, writing poetry and storytelling; and small-scale public artworks that require a second look. Art interventions address situations outside the art world to effect positive change.

⁸ Price-Spratan, Townsend and Goldsby, William. *Reconstructing Rage: Transformative Reentry in the Era of Mass Incarceration*. New York City, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 2012.

⁹ No author listed. Trust for Public Places, “Ray Oldenburg.” <https://www.pps.org/article/roldenburg>.

¹⁰ Harvey, David. “The Right to the City.” *New Left Review*. #53, September–October 2008 <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii53/articles/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>.

Environmental Justice: A global recognition that environmental destruction is racialized, harming people of color and underdeveloped nations far in excess of white, middle-class peoples; and an agreement that those most harmed by environmental racism be in charge of designing the remediation and restitution. First identified by the United Church of Christ’s report “Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States” in 1987, drafted adopted in 1991 at the [National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit](#), and put forward in the “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing” in 1996 (<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>).¹¹

Grassroots, Collaborative

Research: Using site analysis and evaluation, guided observations, and artist study and drawing, project participants gather information and perspectives to inform project design. Involves participants in conceptualizing, negotiating, designing, and testing solutions to collective problems.

Horizontal Collaboration:

Creating structures and processes that subvert power hierarchies to access the intelligence and creativity in the room in a relational network for mutual benefit. This horizontal power structure extends to the agencies and organizations partnering in the project, encompassing the entire team, not just the immediate participants, artists, and designers.

¹¹ Palmer, Bryan. “The History of Environmental Justice in Five Minutes.” *Natural Resources Defense Council*. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/history-environmental-justice-five-minutes>.

Shared Knowledge Base: A body of information generated and exchanged by participants that informs and provides meaning to a project, drawing on a wider context and providing visual and semantic cohesion to the project as a whole.

Friendships and Relational Networks:

The network of close, authentic relationships and friendships that arise between participants through sharing life experiences past and present, and taking time for extended conversations, sharing meals, and relaxing together. Relational networks are the key element in re-knitting social fabric constantly torn by violent and oppressive social policies and realities. This connects to the ethics of caring that forms the foundation of Restored Spaces’ work.

Site Selection: Restored Spaces uses a complex overlay of environmental, economic, political, and social criteria to identify potential sites for its projects. This rubric involves the existence of environmental and economic harms at the site, centers the needs of communities over the political or administrative expediency of a potential choice, and prioritizes communities that have articulated goals for change and have invited Restored Spaces to take part in their urban transformation.

Top Left:
Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts’ Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.



“

Participar en este proyecto, ha sido una experiencia maravillosa... Recuerdo los días de junta que el lugar de venir y nos dieran a conocer sus ideas, como siempre suele ser, está vez fue diferente. El equipo de trabajo vino con nosotros a conocer nuestras ideas y nuestro sueños.”

Sulay Sosa

Community Design Leaders and volunteers building the makerspace with Basurama Collective.
Photo by Gamar Markarian.

Translation of quote:
“Participating in the project has been a marvelous experience, from the planning of the project, until the end, as we gathered in various meetings, parents, community members, and project coordinators, for planning and production... I remember the days of meetings where instead of coming to tell us their ideas, like it always tends to go, this time it was different. The project team came to meet with us to learn our ideas and our dreams.”
Sulay Sosa

Explore



Project Highlights

Top Left:
Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City
of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James
Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art
Education program at Furness High School,
Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.

01

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Work with a
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1. Every Meeting is a Game

Gameplay

Cultural differences and language barriers in the community had so far kept neighbors from finding common ground. Design strategists Gamar Markarian and Mateo Fernández-Muro used gameplay to dissolve these barriers. “Gameplay,” Fernández-Muro says, “is a catalyst, promoting equity, horizontal collaborations, and collective initiative.” Games constitute a first step toward citizen engagement by convening and organizing people at a local level to have fun and dream together. This innovative strategy also reinforced the perception of Southwark School as a hub for neighborhood activity and interaction. Two of several bilingual counseling assistants, Esther Lian and Rodrigo Fernandez Jarque, brought an additional level of language equity to the project, taking on a substantial role in supporting all of the work through interpreting, translating flyers and communication emails, reaching out to diverse immigrant communities, keeping specific language groups up to date, and inviting participants to call for more interpretation when the pace increased or clarity was needed.

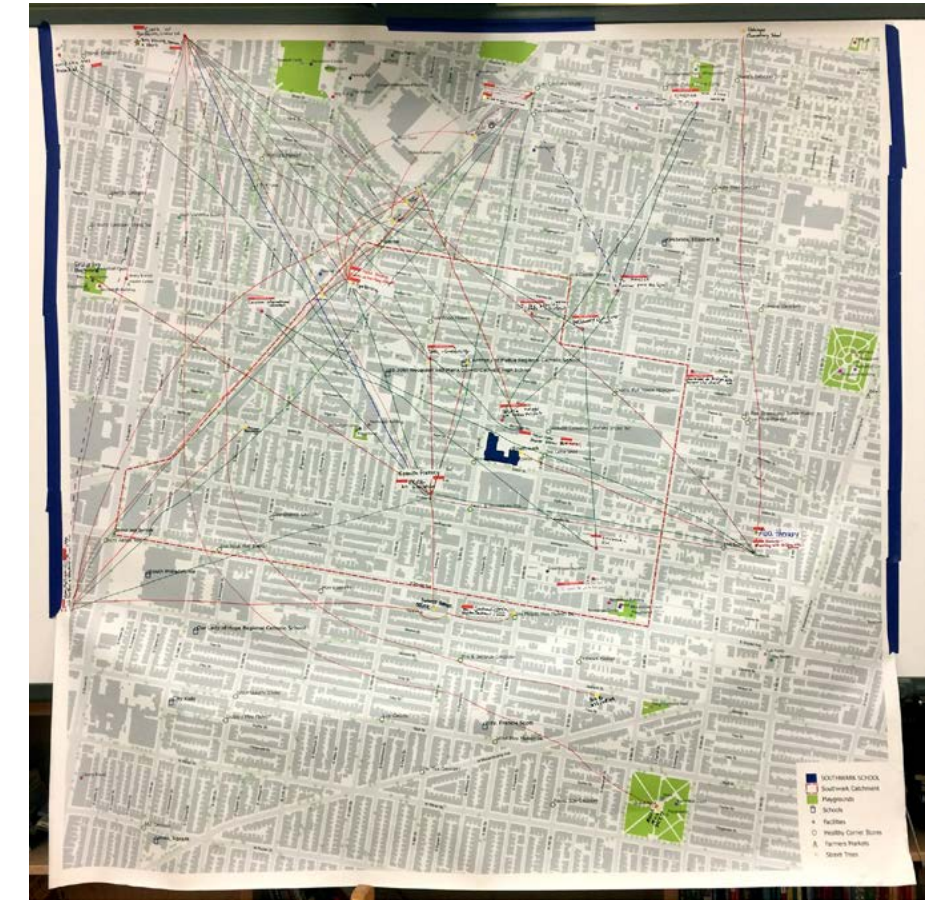
Markarian and Fernández-Muro held to the precept that any design project must address the entire context to be successful. Markarian notes, “For our conceptual framework, we bring in systems thinking. We don’t see the schoolyard as a singular entity that needs to be designed, without relationship to its contexts and to

the people in it. So we find ways of designing tools that introduce systems thinking.” They were fortunate to have the CohStra brief to learn about the project’s history and context, but decided to dig a little deeper. In one of the initial planning meetings, they facilitated a mapping exercise inspired by the book of short stories *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino. In the story of “Ersilia,” inhabitants stretch strings from their homes to the other important places of relationship to their community such as work, governmental offices, or social milieus; and in the story “Fedora,” a designer elaborates on an intricate model of a city whose possible future passes away while he works.

Markarian says, “We introduced the mapping exercise as a warm-up to build community. We had a really good turnout that day and those are a lot of folks who kept coming. By understanding the context, we could design a game that really resonated. We didn’t have string, so we used different colored markers.” Participants drew lines from their homes to the important locales they shared, and realized they had seen each other before but never said hello. For the game, they also identified the special skills they possessed and could potentially share. Many of these were cultural, and participants realized that *Our Park/Southwark* could be a place where they could gather and practice culture together. Using the concept of possible futures, the designers helped participants focus on real possibilities based on existing skills.

Markarian states, “Both Mateo and I are design strategists (meaning we infuse design thinking into traditional planning methods). We both like to dive into uncharted territory. If we don’t know how to do something, we figure it out. It’s a flexible form of practice

responsive to the particular project or situation. Not calling yourself the expert, you allow yourself to respond to situations collectively and collaboratively to take action toward the goals of the project. That’s why we design innovative tools that help us all get there. In the case of *Our Park/Southwark*, we designed the overall strategy for community inclusion, initiated community mapping, created several game designs, and conducted gameplay.” They translated a map of the Southwark School city block into a giant board game and used a mash-up of features and mechanics from Monopoly and Cards Against Humanity to create a game for making the schoolyard useful and meaningful.



Top and Bottom Right:
“Emerging Invisible Networks in South Philadelphia” neighborhood mapping workshop. Photos by Gamar Markarian.

Following Pages, p. 28, P. 29 and p.30
Playing the Southwark Schoolyard Game as a design charrette at Southwark, January 26, 2017. Photos by Steve Weinik.

Following Page, p. 31
Top Right:
Logo of the Southwark Schoolyard Treasure Hunt Game designed by Mateo Fernández-Muro and Gamar Markarian. A drawing from the Southwark Schoolyard Treasure Hunt Game: Memory.

Bottom Right:
Playing the Southwark Schoolyard Treasure Hunt Game. Photos by Shari Hersh.



Gameplay as an Equity-Based Design Strategy

Bringing a playful dimension to urban discussions allows stakeholders with different interests and levels of privilege—such as youth, parents, business owners, elected officials, activists, and neighbors—to discuss better solutions for their environment on an equal footing. Games help expose challenges and lead participants to develop and engage possible alternatives to current conditions. By sparking imaginations and laughter among numerous large and multilingual groups, gameplay created opportunities for unexpected and meaningful connections and allowed uninhibited expression of desires and ideas, emboldening players to imagine and share solutions free from the constraints they might feel in a formal meeting.

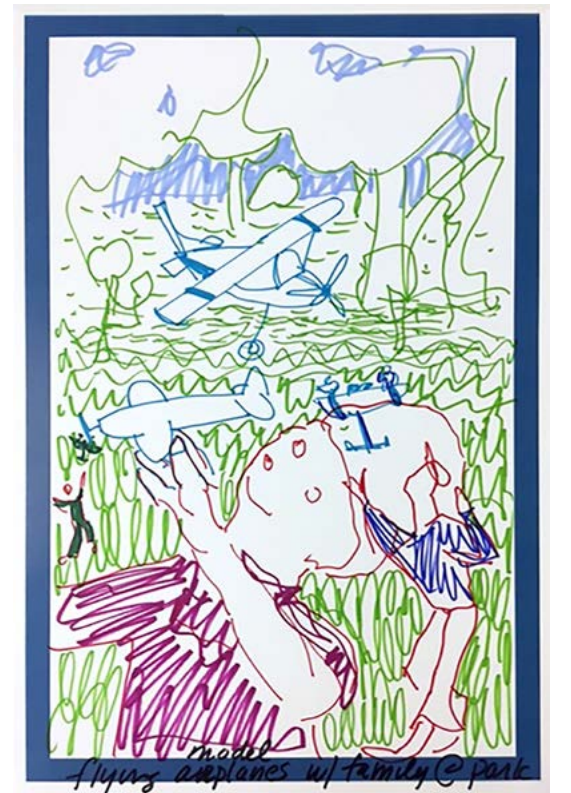
The Southwark Game was played 11 times with various stakeholders; often, games had up to four different languages and up to 35 youth, parents, and community members around the table. Using the game as a design charrette, players selected question cards (fill-in-the-blank statement cards) from five areas of focus: hardscape, greening, programming, art, and a joker pile. Players conferred amongst themselves and selected the best answer. The game sparked a wonderful process of debate and analysis regarding the placement of possible solution cards on the gameboard map of their schoolyard. Players used their intimate, everyday knowledge of the site, and held long, involved, and often hilarious discussions about the pros and cons of each decision, which, in turn allowed their priorities to converge.

“The board game really emerged as a useful tool to facilitate complex design conversations about the space in question. It was so successful that a couple of years later Gamar and I had to adapt it for two other schools and are in the process of reimagining it for a much broader scope at the scale of the city... Believing a space is conformed not only by its physical and geographical conditions but also — and especially—by the social and interpersonal relations that emerge in such space is something that has guided me throughout the entire design process...

What initially started as a mere design process for a schoolyard, not only has become a way to bring people together and weave strong ties among a very diverse community, but on a personal level has also meant a vital and personal experience that has changed my practice ever since.” - Mateo Fernández Muro



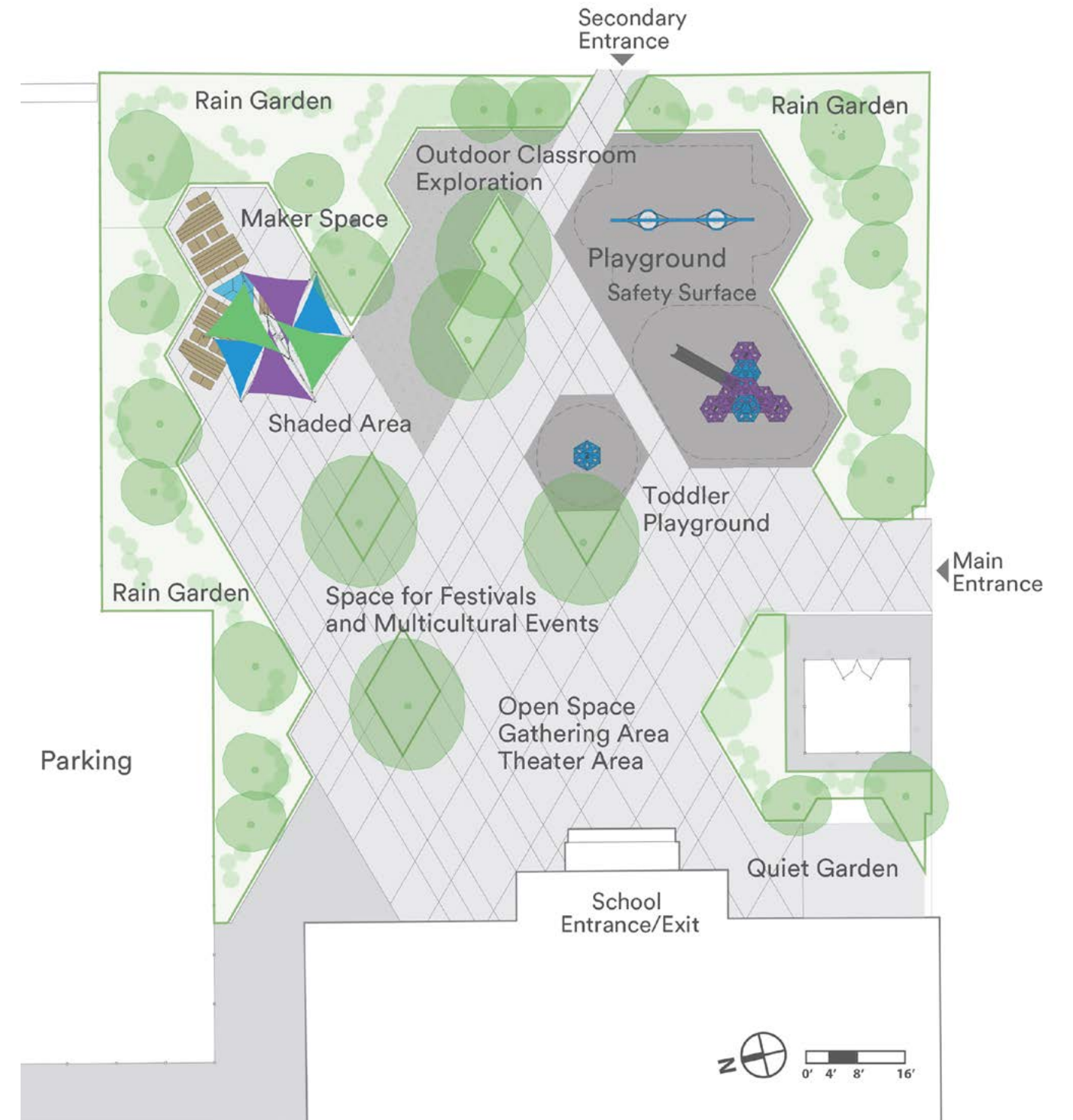
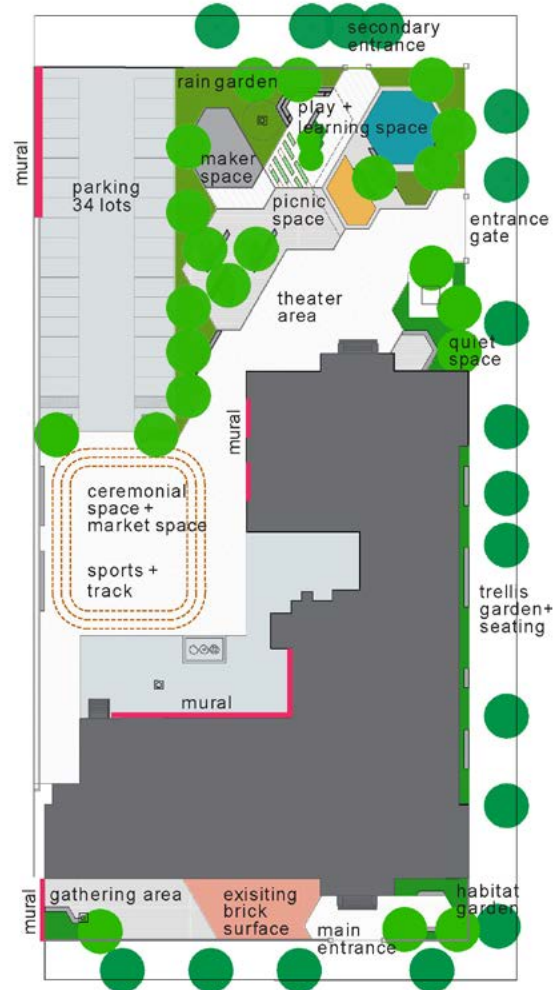
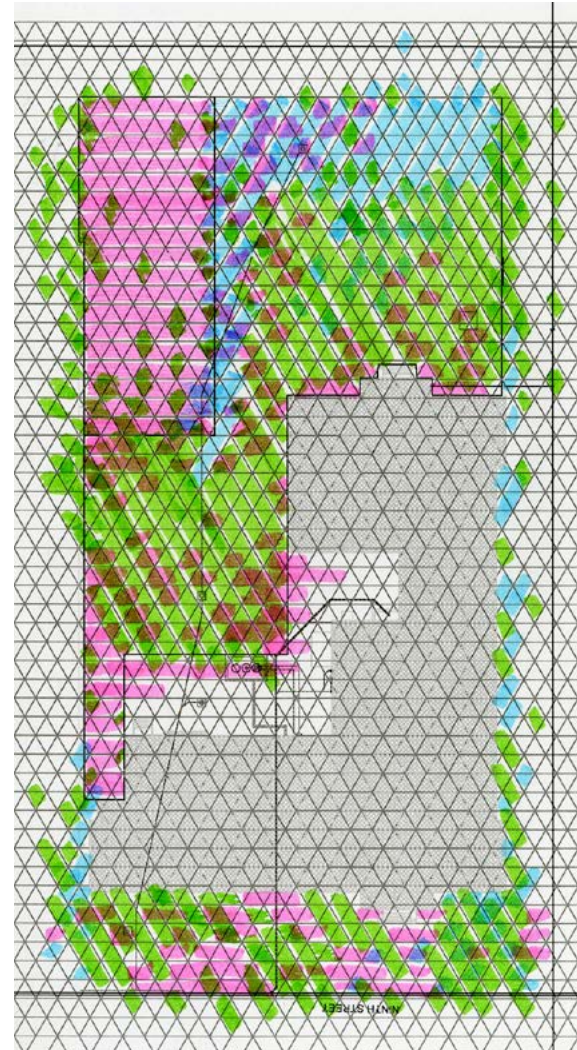
SOUTHWARK
SCHOOLYARD
TREASURE
HUNT



Left:
Renderings of Southwark schoolyard
concept plan by Mateo Fernández-
Muro and Gamar Markarian.



Right:
Southwark schoolyard design
development by Lisa Joan Armstrong.



Gameplay to Create a Space for Imagination and Aspiration

Participants collaborated on creating a shared vision of their future schoolyard using the activity *Postcards from the Future*. The postcard depicted the image of Southwark School nestled in green and colorful surroundings on one side and on the reverse, there were two key questions for participants to answer:

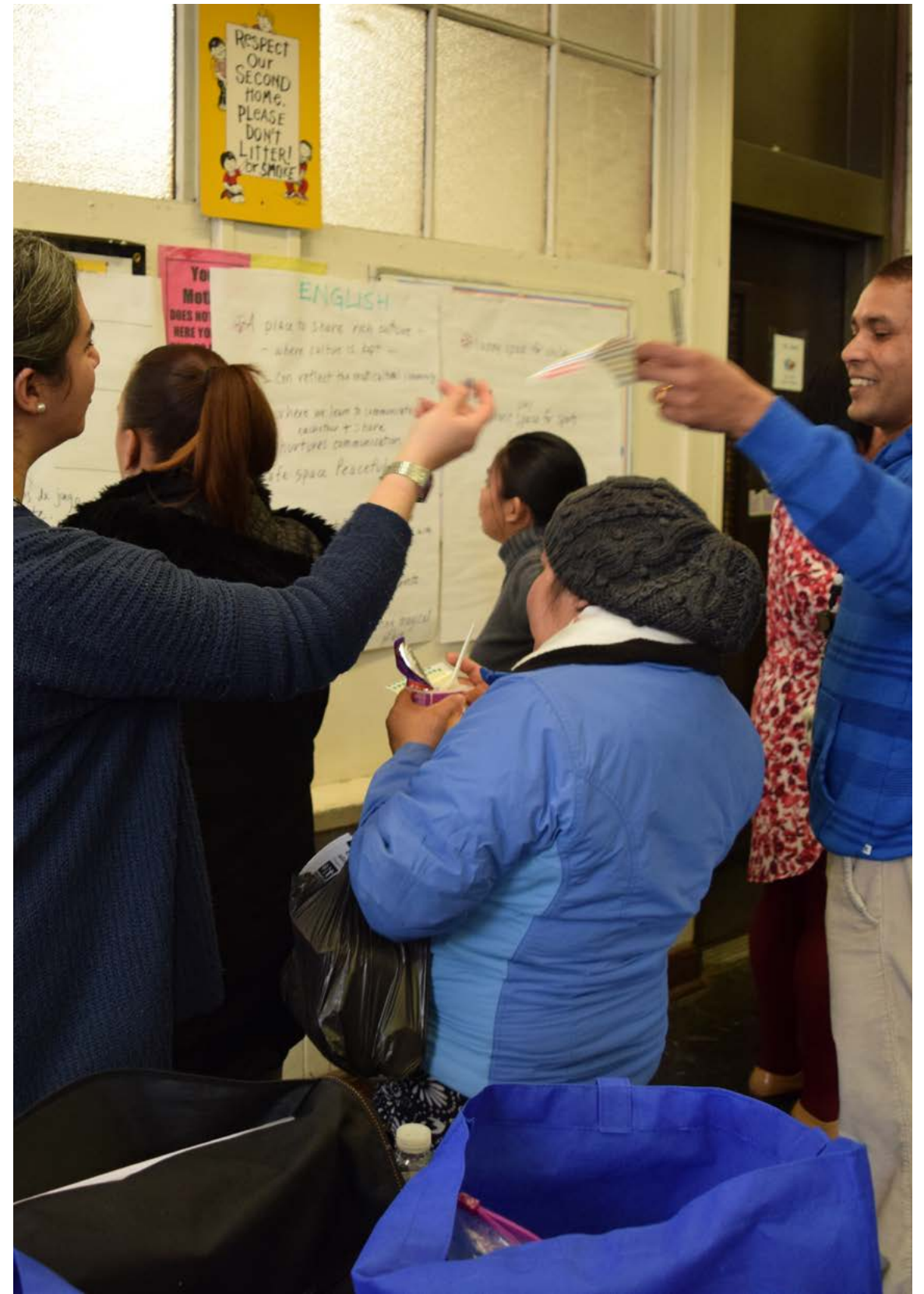
What is your treasure (that you bring into the space)?

What is your dream for Southwark Schoolyard?

The participants wrote their answers as if they were writing as their future selves, describing the already completed school grounds. By eliciting from participants their own unique and personal skills, capacities, or knowledge/conocimiento that they could imagine contributing to the collective endeavor, they could project themselves into the future courtyard, and how they would use it to fulfill participants' Vision Statement to create "[a] space where we can come together, participate and become more respectful and equal with each other." The "recipe" for the schoolyard's design took life from the real ingredients that community members possessed, not from prescriptive ideas of what the community should or must need. Once this shift in perspective was achieved, participants were freed to dream together about what they could actually call into being. The visioning session provided a platform from which a democratized production of meaning supported participants to articulate their aspirations.

Following Pages, p. 34, p. 35, p. 36 and p. 37
"Postcards from the Future" visioning workshop. Photos by Mateo Fernández-Muro, Shari Hersh, and Gamar Markarian.





2. Exercising our “Right To The City”

“The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.” - David Harvey, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology & Geography at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Horizontal Collaboration

Working collectively and horizontally is interwoven into Restored Spaces projects. Applying a critique of racialized capitalism and settler colonialism to its social-practice collaborative art projects has been a hard-fought process for Restored Spaces teams of artists and practitioners. Hersh has been influenced by a group of practitioners and theorists who bring a wide range of perspectives and experience, including curator Lucia Sanroman; Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk and the organizers and artists of Philadelphia Assembled; Fernández-Muro and Markarian; Basurama; Cohabitation Strategies and their modeling of rigorous research; William Goldsby and Reconstruction Inc; New Alphabet School; and Grant Kester. Many people around the world are moving this agenda forward and engaging with the complexities such an effort engenders in practice and in theory.

In his article on the dispute between Kester and his critic Claire Bishop, D.M. Bell explores two opposing approaches to public art: bottom-up collaborative practice championed by Kester versus top-down artistic practice defended by Bishop. Bell identifies a shared perspective between these opponents, who agree that participatory art can fall into playing an irrelevant role vis à vis the power structure. He writes, “Despite their disagreements, a degree of common ground can be established between Kester and Bishop from

the offset, for they both position themselves as hostile to the manner in which forms of participatory art are utilised to generate ‘social inclusion’: an ameliorative approach to social problems that fails to engage with their structural causes (Bishop, 2012: 13; Kester, 2011: 198).”¹²

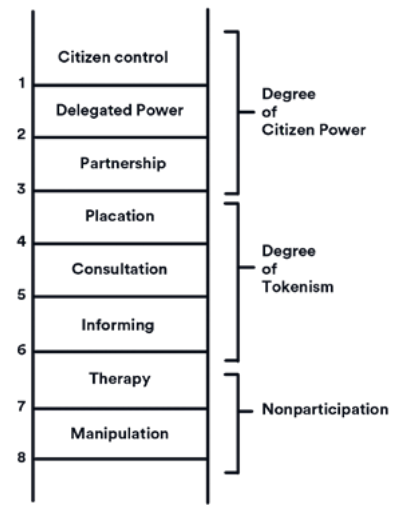
Hersh approaches the projects she sponsors as opportunities to explore the question: How do we create a collaborative project that engages with the structural causes of marginalization and oppression to really create a just future rather than an ameliorative experience? She notes that locating a project where a community has articulated an existing conflict (in this case, lack of green space) positions the project to act as an ally to community members working to change the conditions in their physical and social environment. Hersh asks, “Did we engage with the structural causes? Maybe: we activated the right to the city, people’s right to shape their own space. By practicing horizontal collaboration, we’re trying to engage with structural causes of oppression, including that professionals are positioned as the design experts who know the solutions. The experts don’t live in South Philly. At *Our Park/Southwark*, community members took the driver’s seat in the design process. Horizontal collaboration also counters the oppressive practices of the nonprofit industrial complex in that it forefronts the leadership of local residents.”

Restored Spaces Initiative projects deconstruct dominant forms of artistic practice, referring to the Ladder of Citizen Participation

developed by Sherrie R. Arnstein,¹³ to critique the insufficient ways that participants are included in many public art projects. Hersh emphasizes the importance of making these distinctions about the kinds and degrees of participation. The projects she sponsors through the Restored Spaces Initiative achieve the Partnership rung in Arnstein’s schema, in which participants do not merely provide content suggestions, or feedback on artists’ drafts, but have decisive creative control through all phases of a project, including project evaluation, a crucial element that D.M. Bell notes in his article is downplayed in Grant Kester’s collaborative projects. The equity aspect of the project design included revising the structure of decision-making, and pushing against the challenges of paying participants for their expertise. Hersh possesses

a deep motivation to change the status quo, using a model that is anti-capitalist and atypical of the neoliberal positioning of the artist as genius. She is deeply interested in exploring the conditions that allow for horizontal collaboration to take place so that communities have agency in designing their own projects in partnership with professional artists and designers, and teams of Restored Spaces practitioners. She aspires for future projects to achieve the highest rung in Arnstein’s ladder, Citizen Control, and takes a longitudinal approach to nurture the community capacities this would require.

Horizontal collaboration requires technical knowledge, fortitude, and experience, and signals to the whole cadre of participants that their voices and perspectives have equal weight and equal power. Hersh honors and treasures the practitioners she has found who possess these capacities, which are essential to undertaking horizontal collaboration. Without these, she states, “The obstacles cannot be surmounted.”



The diagram is based on the original 1969 illustration of Sherry Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation as it appeared in the Journal of the American Planning Association.

¹³ Originally published as Arnstein, Sherry R. “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.



Bottom Right: Collaborative design session of the Southwark School front yard.

¹² Bell, D.M. “The Politics of Participatory Art.” Political Studies Review, 2015. ISSN 1478-9302 http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/86339/4/WRR0_86339.pdf.



Community Design Leaders and volunteers building the front courtyard with Basurama Collective. Photo by Basurama Collective.

Translation of quote:
"This is a beautiful project because it makes us feel like we are part of the school, that our work was appreciated, and that we left a legacy to our kids and all the families at Southwark. I am very satisfied with the work I did here because I felt very useful."
Elizabeth Cristobal

“

Es un proyecto muy hermoso porque nos hace sentir parte de la escuela, porque siento que valoran nuestro trabajo y porque dejamos un legado para nuestros hijos y para otras familias. Yo me siento satisfecha de hacer algo por la escuela porque me siento muy útil.”

Elizabeth Cristobal

Community Design Leaders

The creation of horizontal collaboration at *Our Park/Southwark* centered on hiring Community Design Leaders, or CDLs, local residents who took on an integral role in project design. The concept of CDLs was first introduced during the community design workshop at Restored Spaces' Mifflin Square project, where participants were paid to take leadership in the redesign of the park. Named CDLs during that project, they recruited family members, attended events, completed tasks, and distilled the information and ideas gleaned from their community networks. This was the first iteration of Hersh's strategy to create horizontal collaboration in community-led design and has become the crux of the process. CDLs utilize existing leadership skills and grow diverse skill sets like drawing, writing, collaboration, research, building, design, and teaching. They act as speakers and representatives at conferences, events, and interviews. By developing, expressing, practicing, and sharing skills and expertise, they increase their own capacity and that of their community. Hersh emphasizes that this is a mutually beneficial activity, not a one-way process, making a channel for the existing skills in the community to be convened and focused.

At *Our Park/Southwark*, CDLs contributed their wisdom, perspectives, and intimate knowledge of their neighborhood, expertise no outside professional could hope to replicate. More CDLs were hired to create *Our Park/Southwark* than for any other prior Restored Spaces project; this strategy heightened community investment in the project and

helped cultivate the project's overall success and ongoing vitality. Hersh hired three Community Organizers to raise neighborhood awareness and participation and 26 CDLs to co-produce all phases of the project. Many others contributed their expertise and time through volunteering, and some chose to be unpaid CDLs. Perspectives of CDLs and other participants held equal or greater footing in decision-making alongside professional expertise. CDLs and other participants catalyzed the community to articulate obstacles, to envision alternatives, and to bring their visions to reality.¹⁴ Paying CDLs for their contributions dignified their time, energy, expertise, and creative intelligence and underscored the seriousness of their jobs. Investment in community members and their relational networks was weighed equally with the physical outcomes of the project.

The intensive collaborative process of visioning, discussing, reflecting, designing, evaluating, and redesigning resulted in a deeply integrated design and execution that were truly a shared creation with no one voice predominating over the whole. Collective authorship achieved through collaborative art-making redefines creativity as a communal rather than a solitary process. This represents a radical transformation of the artist's role from isolated genius to co-conspirator who convenes the creative energies, talents, and brilliance inherent in all humans, qualities that Philadelphia activist

¹⁴ Harvey, "The Right To The City."



Top Right:
Community design feedback session with Basurama Collective (over Skype). Photo by Gamar Markarian.

Bottom Right:
Community Design Leaders and volunteers building the makerspace with Basurama Collective. Photo by Basurama Collective.

Following Pages, p. 44 and p.45
Eating and celebrating together during the three phases of building with Basurama Collective. Photos by Sulay Sosa and Basurama Collective.



and author William Goldsby calls “the intelligence in the room.” In *Our Park/Southwark*, Restored Spaces advanced its goal of working with artists who are willing to relinquish their privilege of using projects to amass a solo body of work, and who instead can merge their visions and voices with those of CDLs and other participants to generate artworks of profound power, meaning and usefulness through which the community can experience belonging.

CDL Sulay Sosa reflects, “Participar en este proyecto ha sido una experiencia maravillosa, desde la planeación del proyecto, hasta el final, ya que en varias juntas nos reunimos padres de familia, comunidad y personas encargadas de este proyecto, para la planeación y elaboración... Recuerdo los días de junta que en lugar de venir y darnos sus ideas, como siempre suele ser, esta vez fue diferente. El equipo de trabajo vino con nosotros a conocer nuestras ideas y nuestros sueños.” (Participating in the project has been a marvelous experience, from the planning of the project, until the end, as we gathered in various meetings, parents, community members, and project coordinators, for planning and production... I remember the days of meetings where instead of coming to tell us their ideas, like it always tends to go; this time it was different. The project team came to meet with us to learn our ideas and our dreams.)



Top Left:
Ms. Spurka's third-grade class measuring the schoolyard prior to its transformation with Danielle Denk from The Trust for Public Land. Photo by Danielle Denk.

Right:
Design charrette with Ms. Spurka's third-grade class, led by Danielle Denk from The Trust for Public Land, Mateo Fernández-Muro, and Gamar Markarian.

Young People's Voices

Inclusion of young participants is a priority on all Restored Spaces projects. Young people constitute a marginalized group in our society, whose purchasing power is courted by corporations, but whose power in the social hierarchy is subordinated to adults, and whose actual say in the issues facing their communities is limited. Inclusion of young participants helps redress these power imbalances both during the project and beyond, by giving young people hands-on experience in evaluating conditions, articulating goals, and negotiating solutions, skills they can develop as they move forward. For Restored Spaces projects conducted at schools, young people are the primary users of the space with the most expertise about its assets and challenges, and the most to gain from its improvement, and, as such, deserve to have a decisive voice in the development of the project. Intergenerational friendships and working relationships provide valuable opportunities for the conveyance of culture on many levels, and the participation of young people, whose presence is immediate, playful, and spontaneous as well as imbued with futurity, is engaging and inspiring to adult participants.

Many partners prioritized youth having a definitive voice in the project. Danielle Denk of The Trust for Public Land, in partnership with Hersh, Markarian, and Fernández-Muro, led a design curriculum including an in-depth design charrette for Ms. Spurka's third-grade class. Students became mini-designers, conducting site analyses, mapping play culture in the schoolyard, and integrating popular ideas into a sample design.¹⁵ Many other creative activities also generated ideas for the park. Southwark School's Principal Lukov embodied great leadership in championing the project and eliminating all hurdles that arose. Southwark School's STEM teacher, Mrs. Hasan, provided instrumental planning and involvement in creating live, functioning planters and corresponding curriculum with the help of her students. Friends of Southwark provided enthusiastic practical assistance during all phases of the project.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Trust for Public Land. "Southwark School." <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/southwark-school>.

¹⁶ No Author Listed. East Passyunk Crossing Civic Committee. "Education Committee." <http://www.epcrossing.org/committees/education-committee/>.





“

El proyecto significa mucho para mí. No en todas las escuelas tienen un espacio así y además el proyecto se hizo pensando en los niños. Era una oportunidad para apoyar la escuela. Siempre dije que si hubiera algo en lo que ayudar en la escuela lo haría por el bien de nuestros hijos. Eso fue lo que me animó y es una experiencia bonita porque conocí a gente nueva, y aprendí cosas nuevas y a trabajar en equipo.”

Elena Rosas

Ms. Suprka's third-grade class playing the Southwark Schoolyard Game as a design charrette. Photo by Gamar Markarian.

Translation of quote:
“This project means a lot to me. Not all schools have spaces like this [referring to front yard and playground transformation]. In addition, the project was designed with and for kids. This project gave me the opportunity to help the school. I always promised myself to help out at the school for the wellbeing of our kids if ever I was presented with the opportunity. This is what got me excited to take part in this project and it was a beautiful experience because I met new people and learned how to work collectively along the way.” Elena Rosas



3. From Vision to Practice through mural making

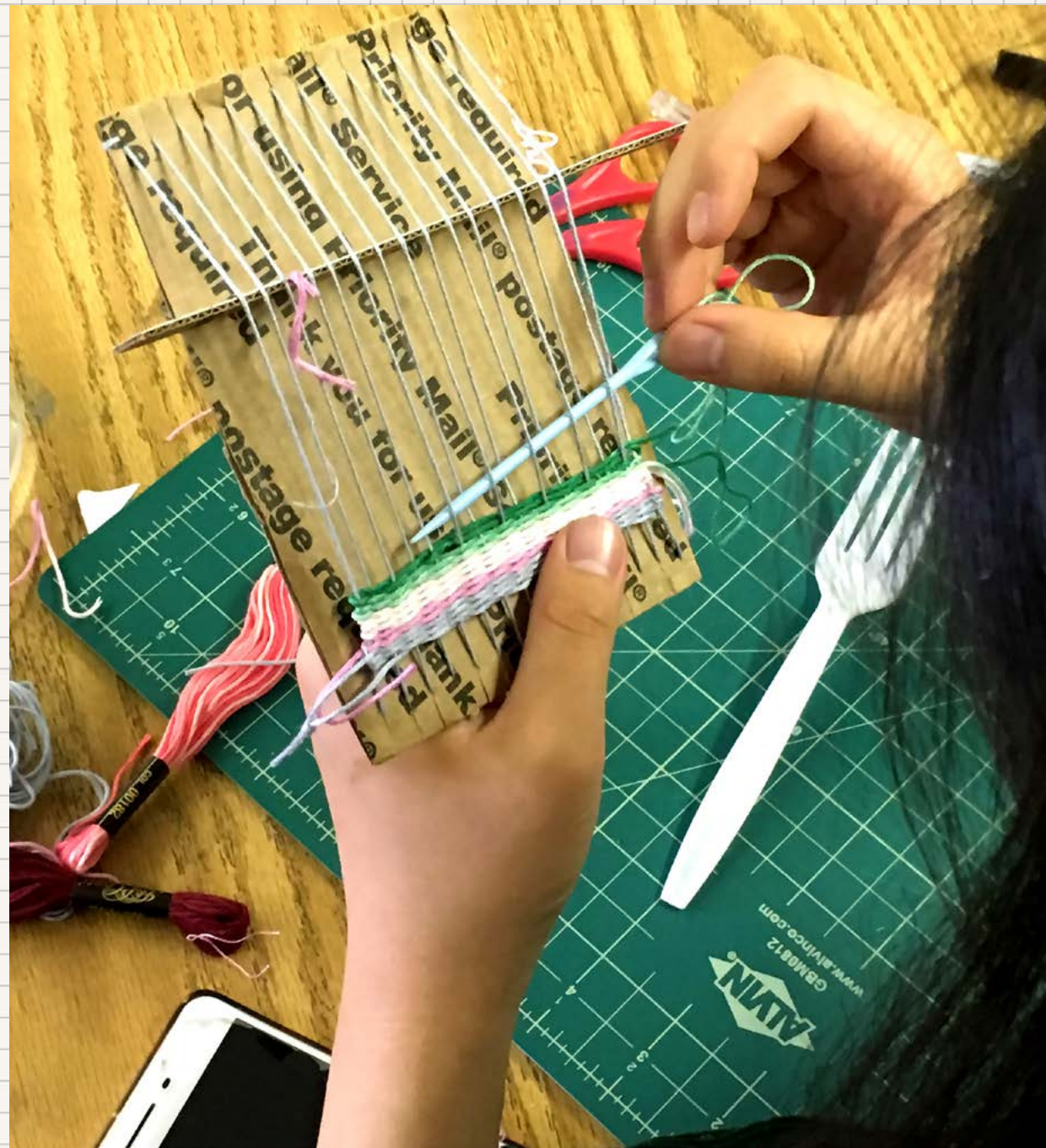
Muralist James Dunn worked in depth with students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School to co-develop the design of the mural Weaving Culture. Dunn generated the concept of weaving as a useful image to incorporate the ideas of cultural diversity and unity. Together, the team settled on the weaver bird as the inspiration for their design. These birds build their nests by weaving, and live in large communal structures which became a metaphor for Southwark School, where people have migrated from all over the world to create a safe haven for their children. Furness High School students, many of whom attended Southwark School, first researched examples of weaving, tapestry, and basket-making from cultures and nations where Southwark School families have originated, to use as

visual and conceptual resources for their design. They studied the colors used by various cultures and the meanings that colors convey. They noticed that many weavings incorporated imagery of birds in their patterns, and discussed the migratory pathways of birds as a metaphor for the human migrations which Southwark School had chosen as its point of departure for *Our Park/Southwark*. During the initial planning meetings, *Our Park/Southwark* participants repeatedly voiced the desire for a place of mutual respect and skill sharing, where all cultural identities could be valued and preserved. The 2016 mural represents a weaving of cultures, using patterns from students' home cultures from all over the world, while preserving the uniqueness of each. The team also used the many examples of weaving and basketry collected by the students as well as some of the color and pattern studies they created to develop a series of mini-murals for the walls of Southwark School that serve to illustrate a map of families' countries of origin and to metaphorically weave these together. By devoting time and resources to building relationships of mutual concern as the Weaving Culture mural proposes, the project served to re-knit social fabric and increase a sense of belonging among all participants.



Top Left:
Weaving Culture © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street. Photo by Steve Weinik.

Right and Following pages, p. 52 and p. 53:
Weaving Culture mural research and studies by James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School.

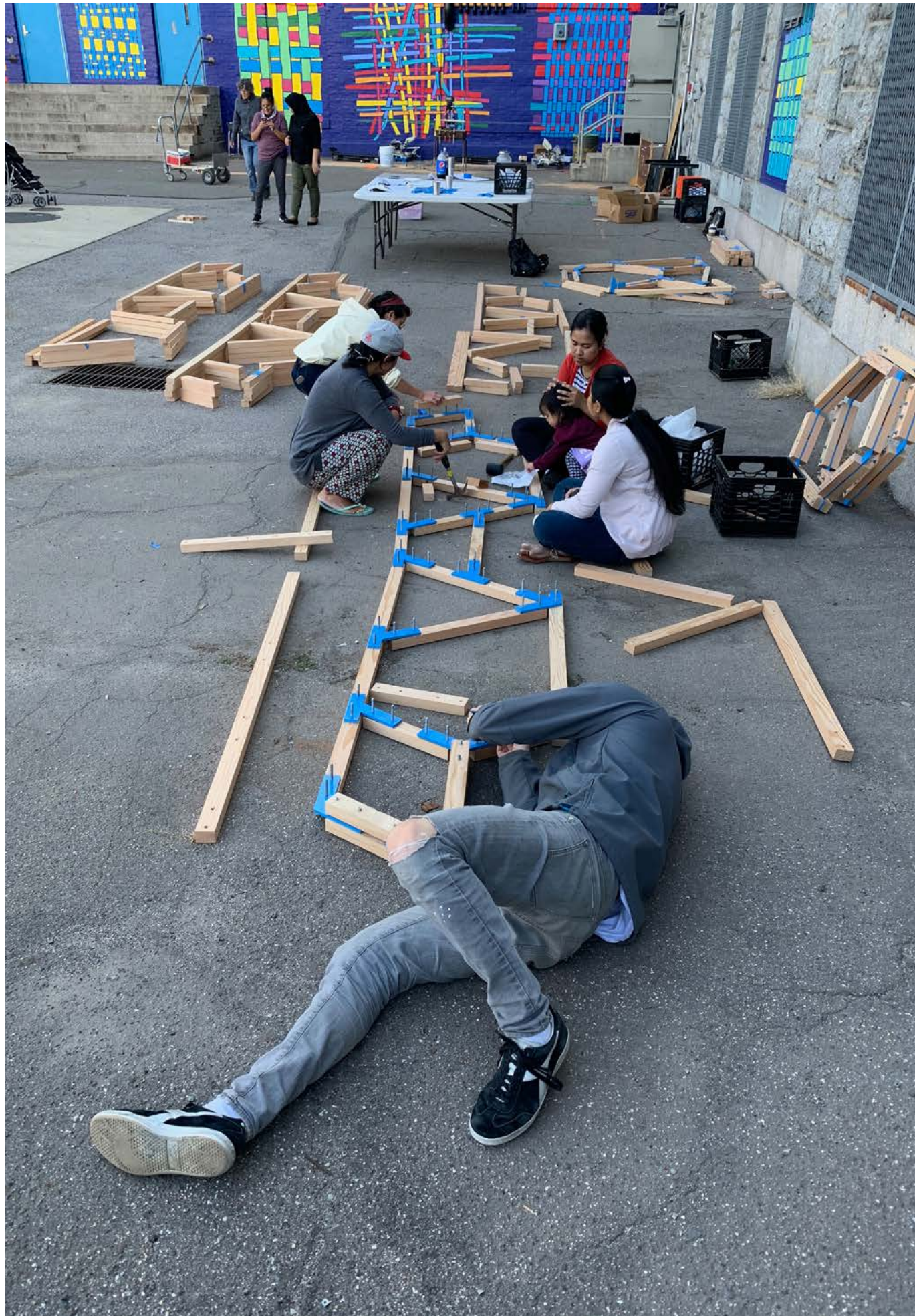




Left:
Fun day at Southwark School. Artist James
Dunn weaving with Southwark students
and parents.

Right:
Design, painting, and installation of the
Weaving Culture mural by James Dunn and
the students in Mural Arts' Art Education
program at Furness High School.





4. To Work Collectively, Work with a Collective

Based on the project's Vision Statement seeking to create "A space where we can come together, participate and become more respectful and equal with each other," the team invited Basurama Collective to facilitate the design/build process for the front gathering space and garden, and the maker space in the playground. Basurama Collective, based in Madrid and Bilbao, upcycles trash to bring awareness to outmoded values of consumption that produce massive material and human waste, and to create new perspectives and values that place the communal before the individual, engendering relatedness, collaboration, and the discovery of beauty in discarded and quotidian materials. Basurama was instrumental in catalyzing participants to bring their dreams into reality by deepening the intentionality and intensity of their collaborations.

Twenty-six CDLs worked with Basurama Collective, Hersh, Markarian, Fernández-Muro, and other Restored Spaces staff to conceptualize, design, and build the school's front gathering space and gardens as well as the makerspace from repurposed school desks diverted from the School District's waste stream. The project recast creativity as a collective, not an individual, endeavor. Basurama's Manuel (Manu) Polanco says, "The

physical construction of a project is one of the most effective ways to build a community. For this purpose, the construction work must be inclusive, relaxed, and involve a positive learning experience."

Building together with Basurama Collective moved participants from conceptualizing to making in a seamless way and supported them to actualize their vision of *Our Park/Southwark*. The experience for participants was both relaxed and exciting. Manuel Polanco dedicated exceptional care and intention to foster a collective process and fluid, inviting space for inexperienced participants to design and build.

All design/build events included a shared meal, for which team members cooked dishes from their own traditions, realizing the project's vision of "[a] place to share rich culture... and which can reflect the multicultural community." Meals provided plenty of time to have fun and connect, for the express purpose of building community among participants. Sulay Sosa shares, "Las reuniones fueron diferentes, más que un equipo de trabajo fue una familia. Y los días de trabajo, compartir los alimentos juntos como en familia, compartir con personas que nunca había imaginado, un ejemplo es con Manu[el], que al principio en las reuniones sólo lo veía por medio de la computadora y después trabajar personalmente con él fue algo bueno." (The meetings were different, more than a work team we were a family. And more than just work days, to share meals together as in a family, to share with people I never would have imagined; an example is Manu, who at the first meetings I only saw over the computer, and afterwards to work with him in person was something good.)

"Manu, the designer and leader of the project, was very good at showing/explaining what needed to be done and how, and then leaving it up to the community members to do the work. He was participating and supervising, but in no way micromanaging. I think that this was very empowering, especially to those of us who may not have been very familiar with some of the tools, materials or techniques... Being part of the building process truly felt like being part of something special, which is not necessarily something I would have foreseen. Despite the fact that most people didn't really know each other very well at the beginning of the build, the best word to describe the building process in my opinion would be 'organic'. Everyone, regardless of experience, age, gender, and ethnicity, was working together, sharing knowledge and tools while the kids (who some of us, including myself had to bring to be able to participate), were all playing nearby. This experience is something that I want to share with as many people as possible, and I know others feel the same way." CDL Olga (last name withheld)

Left: Community Design Leaders and volunteers building the makerspace with Basurama Collective. Photo by Gamar Markarian.

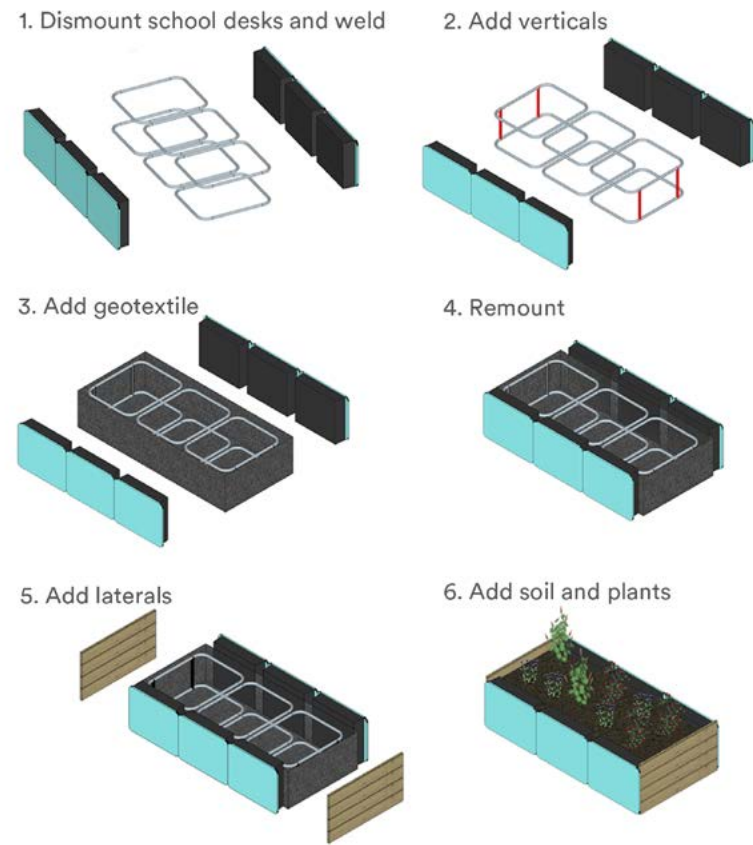


The friendships galvanized by Basurama among the whole team during the planning phase via Skype and by Manu Polanco during the intensive design/build phase on site formed a vessel strong enough to support stewardship of the park upon its completion. Polanco also asserts, “Care needs maintenance, repetition, and doing things slowly”. The maintenance and care for the gardens provides an ongoing platform for community relationships to deepen and strengthen over time. The active network of CDLs continues to care for and activate the greenscape on behalf of the community.

CDL Olga (last name withheld) described the success of this strategy: “In the process, we not only built the courtyard. Working towards a common goal allowed us to build a very diverse community. This is an experience that I, and I am sure many others, are very grateful to have been a part of. I very fondly look back on the time I spent with everyone during the build and am excited to know all of the people I got to meet.”

Left:
Community Design Leaders and volunteers building the front courtyard with Basurama Collective. Photo by Steve Weinik.

Phase 1 Planters

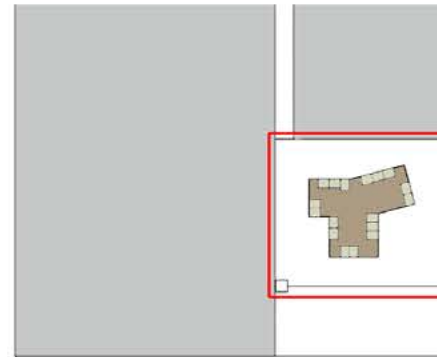
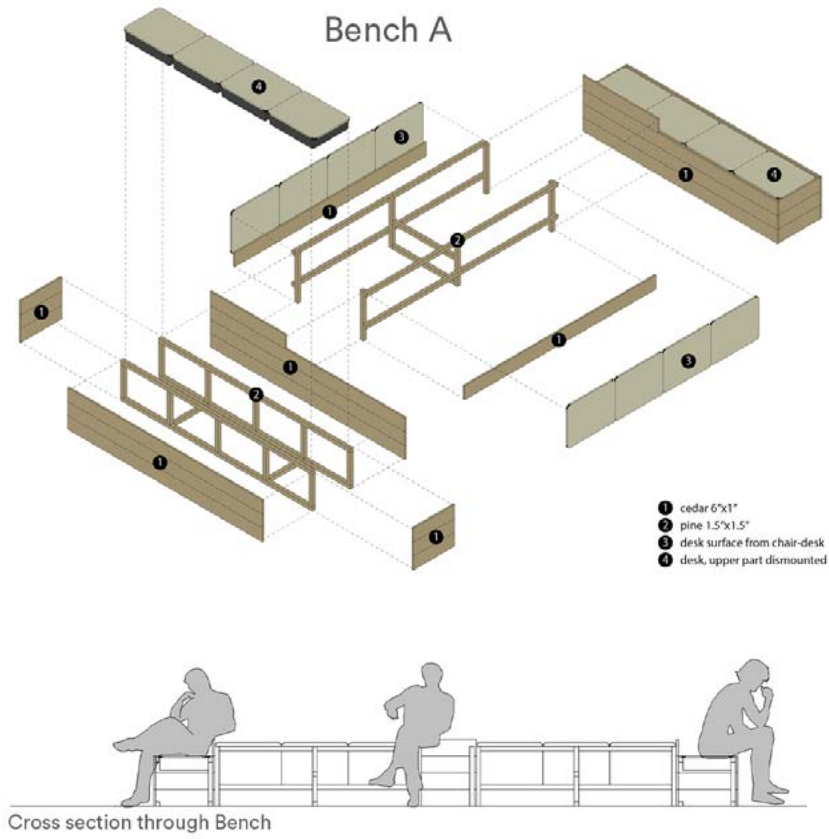


Left:
Design renderings by Basurama Collective.

Right:
Community Design Leaders and volunteers
building the planters with Basurama
Collective. Photos by Basurama Collective.



Phase 2 Front Courtyard



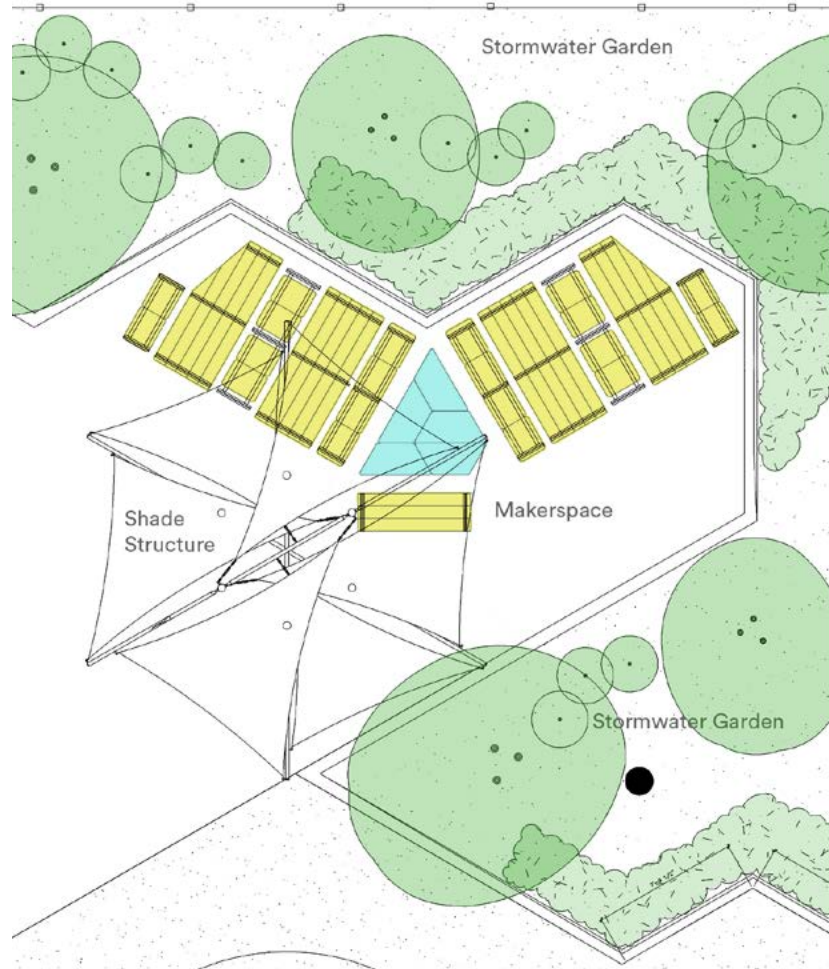
Left:
Design renderings by Basurama Collective.

Top Right:
Community Design Leaders and volunteers building Southwark's front courtyard with Basurama Collective.
Photo by Steve Weinek.

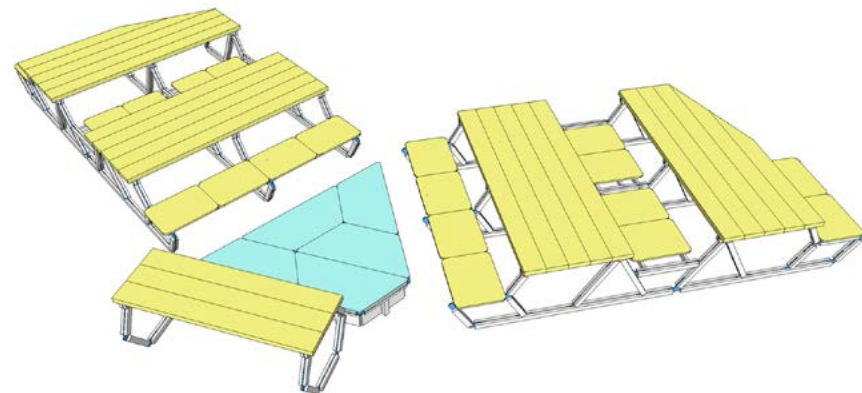
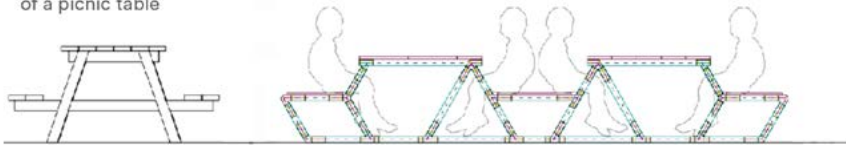
Bottom Right:
Weaving Culture © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School; *Our Park* © 2018 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Basurama Collective, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.
Photo by Steve Weinek.

Phase 3 The Makerspace

GENERAL PLAN



Design based on the dimensions
of a picnic table



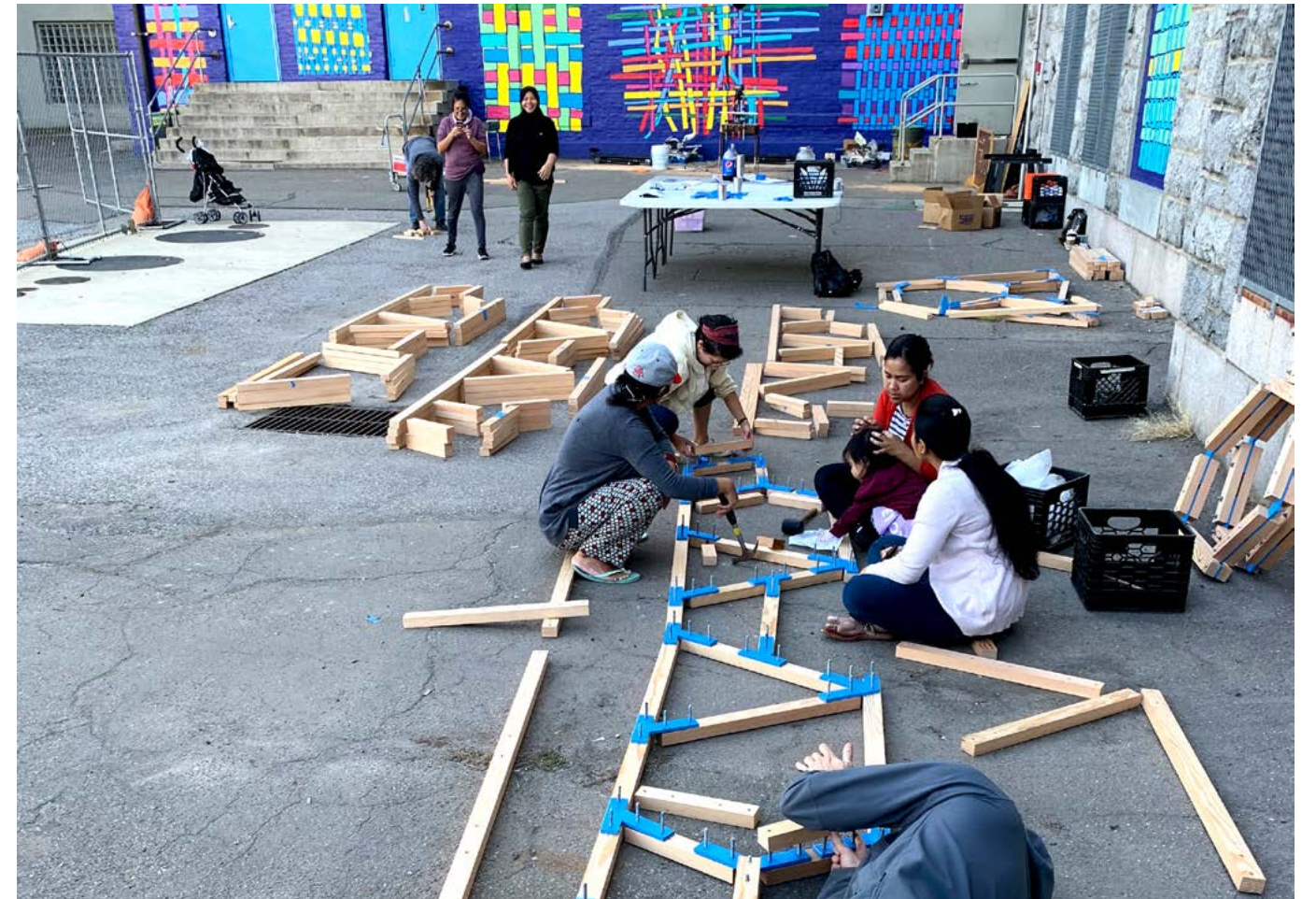
Left:
Design renderings by Basurama Collective.

Right:
Community Design Leaders and volunteers
building the makerspace with Basurama
Collective. Photos by Gamar Markarian.

Following Pages, p. 66 and p.67

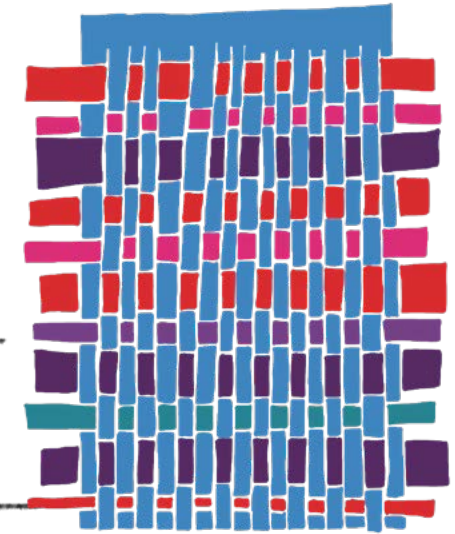
Left:
Weaving Culture © 2017 City of
Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James
Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art
Education program at Furness High School,
Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.
Photo by Steve Weink.

Top Right:
Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City
of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James
Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art
Education program at Furness High School,
Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.





Lessons Learned



- Gameplay proved an effective strategy for negotiation and consensus building. It neutralized leadership and hierarchy to make space for collaborative thinking. It opened the opportunity for visionary and imaginative planning and solutions far beyond typical conversations around change. One participant shared that during the game, players felt heard, and enjoyed this creative way to listen to each other's ideas, without having plans or design solutions imposed on them. She added, "AND we had so much fun!"
- *Our Park/Southwark* chose strategic entry points into the school community, gravitating toward gatekeepers of diverse ethnicities, and also selected meeting times most convenient to working families. Both of these tactics resulted in a very diverse group of CDLs. The dedication of Bilingual Counseling Assistants was key to the project as it made planning possible and provided a bridge of existing relationships to the participating families.
- Horizontal collaboration created a strong core of participants who were invested in and knowledgeable about the space. The community thinks of the space as their own, and makes use of it for their needs. Evidence for the success of this process is provided by the ongoing presence of many community members, some teachers, and neighboring organizations who continue to facilitate the use of the space.
- For collectivity, work with a collective. Basurama defines their work as building community, while building a spatial intervention. Working collectively scaffolds the capacity to address structural change and gives an opportunity to practice what we all know: that working together works better.
- The meals and the gatherings at the end of each build session removed scheduling stress for parents and created kinship between participants. At the table, artists, project managers, and community members were on equal ground. Shared meals are an expression of equity, of sharing culture, of horizontal collaboration. Olga noted, "Having communal meals prepared by and for community members allowed everyone to bond over food, share recipes, and just have casual conversations. The meals I would dare say, to an extent, also were instrumental in bridging language barriers as people felt more comfortable to talk during lunch, and provided the opportunity for everyone to get to know each other better."
- Perhaps due to a very close alignment between team members' political perspectives, values, and agendas; publicly recognizing a commitment to collectivity, and an awareness of racialized capitalism, the team worked exceptionally well together, intuitively and fluidly handling obstacles and solving problems in ways that prioritized collaboration and the capacity-building of the group.
- The nature of working with partners who are tasked with coordinating the many demands of permitting, permissions, and technical expertise needed to design and implement green stormwater infrastructure and playground construction created some limits around collaboration and sometimes protracted timelines. This remains a challenge on all sites when partnering with a playground or green stormwater infrastructure component.
- Going forward we would like to ensure more time for reflection at regular intervals across the span of the project, knowing that gathering parents, youth, neighbors, and staff poses inherently challenging scheduling issues.



The Project Now

At this writing, COVID-19 has put the project on hold. The team is waiting to install the makerspace and proceed with a socially distanced dedication event. Caring and maintenance for the space has been shared for two years between professional contractors in the playground and CDLs, faculty, parents, and community members. The garden beds have grown and are producing food for the participants and their families. CDL Sulay Sosa relates, “En varias ocasiones he visto a padres con sus hijos usando los juegos para los niños aún no está abierto para el público.” (On various occasions I saw parents with their children using the play equipment but at this point it is not open to the public.) She notes the challenges facing participants in maintaining the gardens during the pandemic. “Antes de COVID-19, tuvimos una reunión

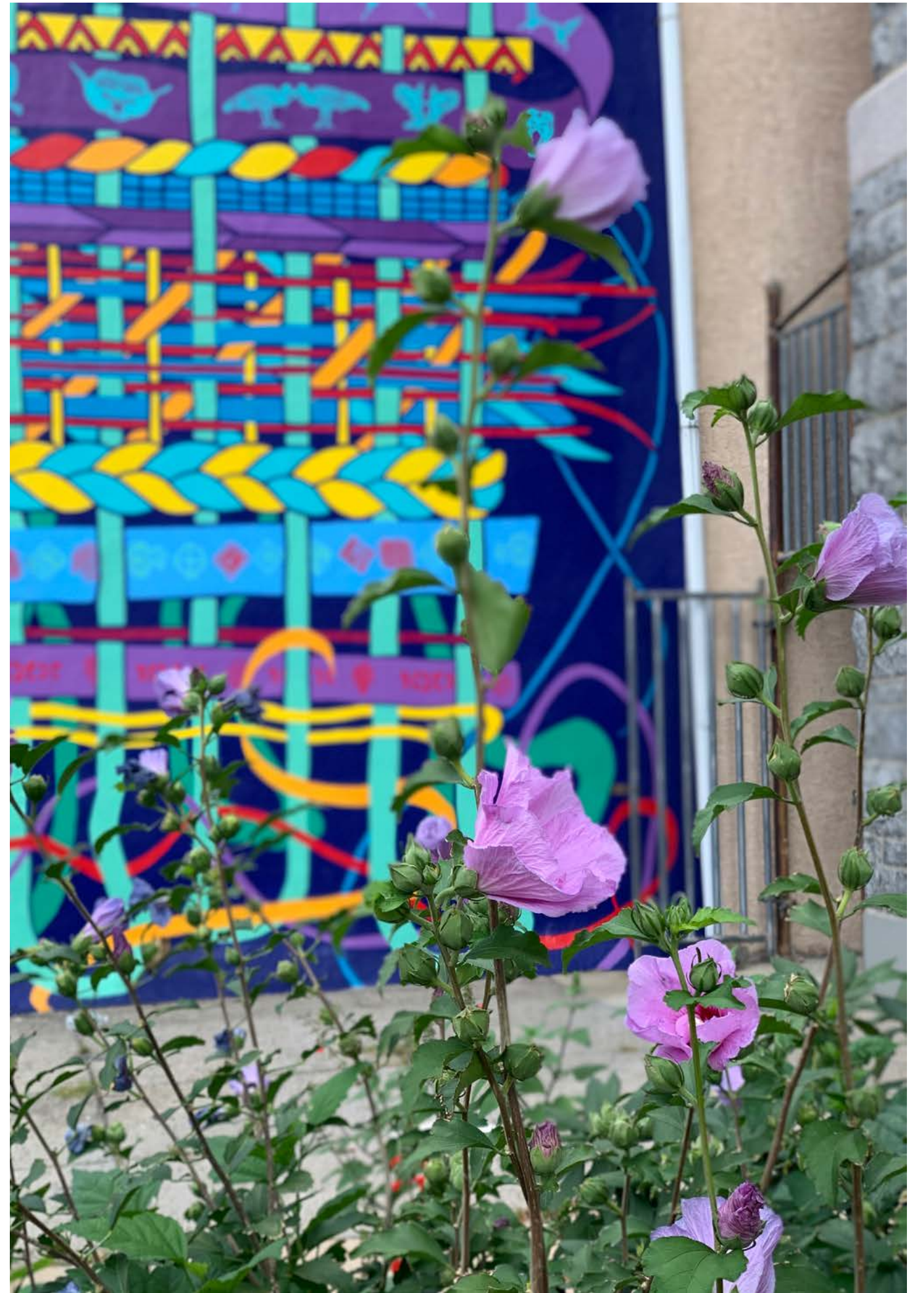
para hablar sobre el mantenimiento del patio y muchos padres se comprometieron a ayudar. La última vez que fuimos a limpiar éramos siete personas. En la última reunión por Zoom donde estuvieron la maestra y varias personas más, yo comenté sobre la basura y la importancia de mantener el patio limpio para que todos los días se vea hermoso y las familias se sientan seguras.” (Before COVID-19, we held a meeting to see who would want to help with the maintenance of the courtyard, and several parents said they wanted to help. Last time we went to clean, seven people participated. At the last meeting on Zoom, with the teacher and various other people, I commented on the trash and how important it is to keep the courtyard clean so that it looks beautiful and the families feel safe there.)



Top Left:
Mural detail. Weaving Culture © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.

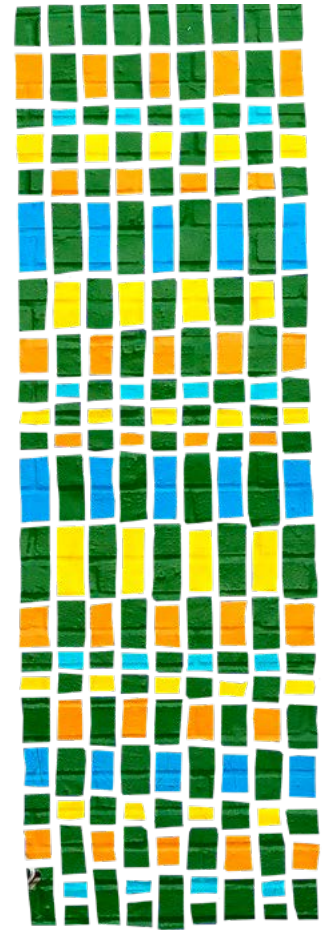
Right:
Weaving Culture © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School; Our Park © 2018 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Basurama Collective, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street. Photo by Steve Weinik.

Following Pages p. 70, p. 71 and p. 72
Details from Southwark School's front-yard gardens at maturity one year later. Photos by Gamar Markarian.





What's Next?



We are encouraged by the continued engagement of the community even under these adverse, unplanned conditions. Restored Spaces will continue to support organizing at the site in Spring 2021, COVID-19 permitting. One possibility is creating a mini-grant proposal modeled on the Neighborhood Yes Fund, a community-directed granting program administered by Bartram's Garden and Mural Arts Philadelphia with funding from ArtPlace, a national foundation. The Yes Fund is designed to transfer capacity through dollars and technical support for community initiatives that create positive change in local neighborhoods and opportunities for neighbors to meet and brainstorm about

the future of their neighborhood. To build a growing network of mobilized neighbors, active or interested members of the community are invited to apply and talk through their ideas with Yes Fund staff. A mini-grant similar to this would allow participants, neighbors, and staff to further animate *Our Park/Southwark* by realizing some of their aspirations. These could range from a knitting workshop to a dance class, depending on the interests of the group. It would support the capacity of the team to take on full ownership of the park and direct collective energies to maintaining and activating the space as they desire, gaining administrative experience in the process.

Top Left:
Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.

Top Right:
Mural detail. *Weaving Culture* © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / James Dunn and the students in Mural Arts' Art Education program at Furness High School, Southwark School, 1835 South 9th Street.



Our Park/Southwark interim
dedication, October 4, 2018.
Photo by Steve Weinik.

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