

# Re-program and Re-design Bethany Park



New futsal courts bring new life to Bethany Park (photo by Matt Kleinmann)

## COMMUNITY NEED

Bethany Park, a public park at the “heart” of the Central Avenue District, is one of the core parks of the county and is of medium size at 8.4 acres. This park has one of the largest populations surrounding it with 8400 residents that live within a half-mile radius—it is the second most impactful park in Wyandotte County. Its best assets are its recreation center with a gymnasium and community rooms, the newly installed futsal courts and the number of people it attracts to “La Placita” events (started in 2014). The park suffers with limited pathways and a playground that many consider unsafe for children.

In 2013, graduate students from the KU School of Architecture Design and

Planning conducted a survey of residents to determine what the community liked and did not like about the Central Avenue area. Many shared that Bethany Park was regarded as the “least liked” place in the neighborhood. Two years later, when surveyed again, many still regard Bethany Park as an “unsafe place for children and families and in need of more improvements” and “because of the way the land slopes away from Central Avenue, it is difficult to see activities from the road and it feels unsafe.”

## PROCESS

Recent developments: “La Placita” started by the Central Avenue Better-

ment Association (CABA), is an initiative designed to regularly attract people for pop-up food markets. It is intended that this will benefit neighborhood residents, local businesses, potential businesses and attract those from outside of the community—in effect, change the current negative perception of the park to one as a place where regular fun events happen. The newly added futsal courts with night-lighting are wildly popular and active well into the night.

Interviews with nearby residents and local businesses revealed these needs:

- improve the visibility of the park by transforming the land to improve visibility from the road;



Neglected play equipment and underutilized community center.



Possible direction for re-imagined facade on community center. Toof Building in Memphis, Tennessee



La Placita event in Bethany Park brings life to the park on a bi-weekly basis. (Photo by Matt Kleinmann)

- provide more benches and park elements to make the park inviting;
- improve the children’s playground;
- add a dog park;
- incorporate art, music and dramatic performances in the park;
- develop other programming and events that to be held in the park (i.e., walking, running and bicycle clubs, Zumba fitness programs, 5K walking events, etc.)
- improve the appearance of the Bethany Community Center so that it is more inviting;
- add more night lighting so that it feels safer at night;

- create signage and landscaping that is more inviting, informative and welcoming .

## NEXT STEPS

Exhibit the proposed plan in public spaces to seek feedback from a variety of stakeholder residents and community leadership through CABA, UG Parks & Recreation, Free Wheels for Kids, YMCA, Healthy Communities Wyandotte Infrastructure Action Team, the local elementary school, local church members and others. What should be supported? Who will support programs? What public and private funding support is possible? This park plan drawing is intended to generate dialogue and build consensus and capacity to make positive changes.

## PROJECT FACTS

Timeline: August 2015-Present

## PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

- Rabia Bajwa
- Jeremy Chuon
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## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Central Avenue Betterment Association (CABA)
- Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City
- KU Work Group for Community Health & Development
- Community Health Council of Wyandotte County
- Unified Government Parks & Recreation
- Healthy Communities Wyandotte
- KU Mobile Collaboratory

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Marty Thoennes, CABA
- Edgar Galicia, CABA

