

***Rekindling the Human Spirit Through Urban  
Design: Creating Spaces for Joy***

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## *Approval Page*

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# *Rekindling the Human Spirit Through Urban Design: Creating Spaces for Joy*

## **Abstract**

What makes people joyful? How can we foster happy, healing spaces through urban design that allow for all community members to channel emotional wellbeing? In a fast paced, consumer-oriented economy, the importance of maintaining mental health and well-being is often ignored. This paper seeks to answer these questions through the synthesis of existing literature on urban design, society, and case study analyses of existing public spaces. Although the research focuses on social transformation through the implementation of urban design principles, the disciplines of city planning, public health, sociology, and psychology are discussed as well. The research explores techniques that would allow individuals to lead more fulfilling lives through simple changes to the urban environment.

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# Executive Summary

Joy is not only a component of the human experience that makes life more enjoyable, but it is also a fundamental facet of the human spirit, critical to health and well-being. However, as we age, the pursuit of capital, material things, and security/stability often take precedent over the pursuit of happiness. Though these pursuits are not mutually exclusive, and stability is essential in life as well, there is no reason why joy should dwindle as we grow older.

This paper argues that there are ways we can intentionally create spaces for joyful experiences to happen, and spaces that break through the regimented schedule of working adulthood. Though individual engagement with these spaces and lifestyle choices cannot be controlled, urban design can act as a vessel and catalyst for happiness to break through the monotony of everyday life.

**Chapter 1: Introduction** provides a brief overview of how the subject matter came to be, including why these spaces are important in relation to an aging population and why it is pertinent in suburban areas specifically.

**Chapter 2: Context and Rationale** section sets the rest of the paper into perspective, focusing on suburban Campbell, California as a possible implementation site. This section provides location and demographic information, alongside contextual information of the city. The chapter utilizes information collected through firsthand interviews and research conducted during our studio class, CRP 341 (Urban Design Studio III), taken Spring Quarter 2022 with Professors Beate von Bischofinck and Amir Hajrasouliha.

**Chapter 3: Literature Review** focuses on existing literature pertaining to urban design, society/culture, and happiness, and the relationships between the three.

**Chapter 4: Case Studies** presents three examples of ways placemaking and urban design can be used to create more diverse and meaningful environments for the public to engage in. The first case study known as One Green Mile located in Mumbai, India provides an example of how to make use of underutilized spaces. The second case study, Spruce Street Harbor Park, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania here in the United States illustrates the potential of thoughtful programming. The third case study, Gibson Mariposa Park, located in El Monte, California, shows a viable alternative reflective of the suburban scale of Campbell.

**Chapter 5: Recommendation** ties together some of the lessons learned from the literature and case studies and presents possible ways in which Campbell can implement these takeaways. This includes ideas for programming and the associated images. This recommendation for the City of Campbell can also serve as a suggestion for similar suburban communities in California and beyond.

Finally, **Chapter 6: Conclusion** provides a project summary and ideas for further inquiry.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Children seem to find joy easily; the same cannot be said for adults. Trips to the park to play on the swings, getting cartoon character popsicles from the local ice cream truck, and easter egg hunts hosted by the city are a few such examples of childhood joys. The human spirit seems lively in children. The things we did as youth (play, laugh, converse, celebrate, etc.) seem harder to come by as we age. Playgrounds at parks have signs that say “intended for ages 5-12” or something along those lines. This illustrates that although public spaces do attempt to incorporate play, these elements do not cater to adults in the same way. In the case of Easter egg hunts, my hometown of West Covina limited the event to children under 10 years of age. (Nowadays, the event doesn’t even take place). Although playgrounds and easter egg hunts may not be the entertainment of choice for most teenagers, adults, and older adults, this paper will try to explore ways to recreate joy that is often found lacking in public spaces.



Figure 1.1 & 1.2: Playground sign examples (SmartSign 2022)

In universities, students discover friends to go to the park with, and they play on the swings, roll down grassy hills, and cartwheel across lawns (amongst other activities). It makes



life less mundane. Maybe it's more socially acceptable, living in a college town where virtually anything goes, or maybe these activities are less frowned upon because they're done in groups. However, personal observation has shown that this type of spirit is lacking in society overall – the spark, the joy, and the pure happiness that we once all knew as children is absent. Partaking in activities simply for the sake of doing them and void of motives tied to ego and reputation is more difficult to do, a claim gathered through anecdotal evidence. Reclaiming joy is something people must intentionally do, or at least these are the messages echoed via self-help books and social media infographics.

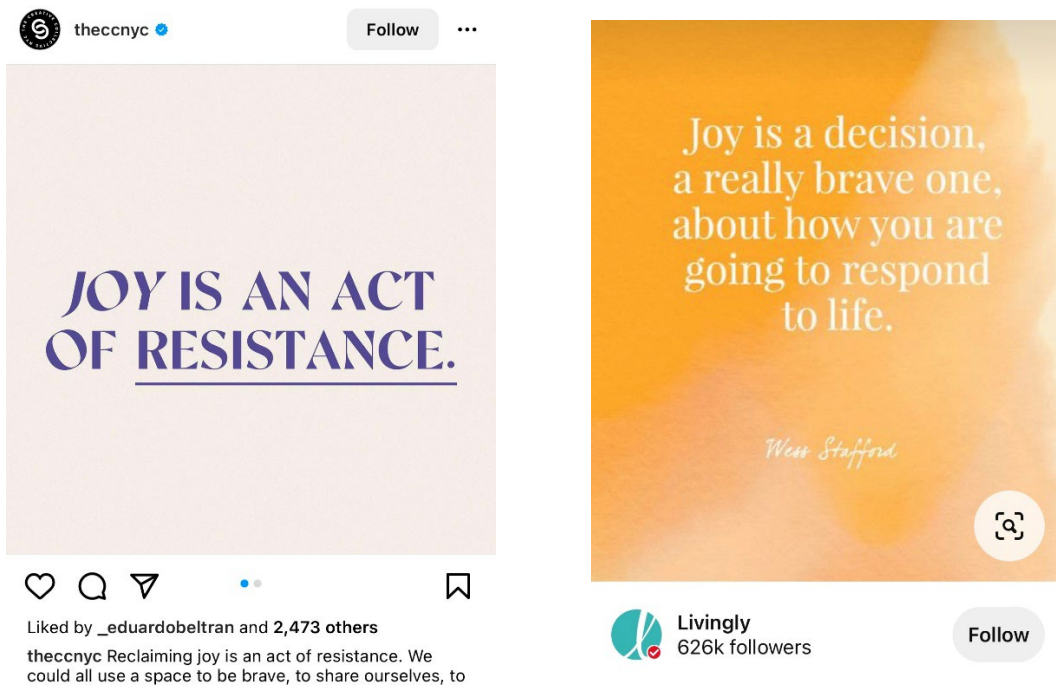


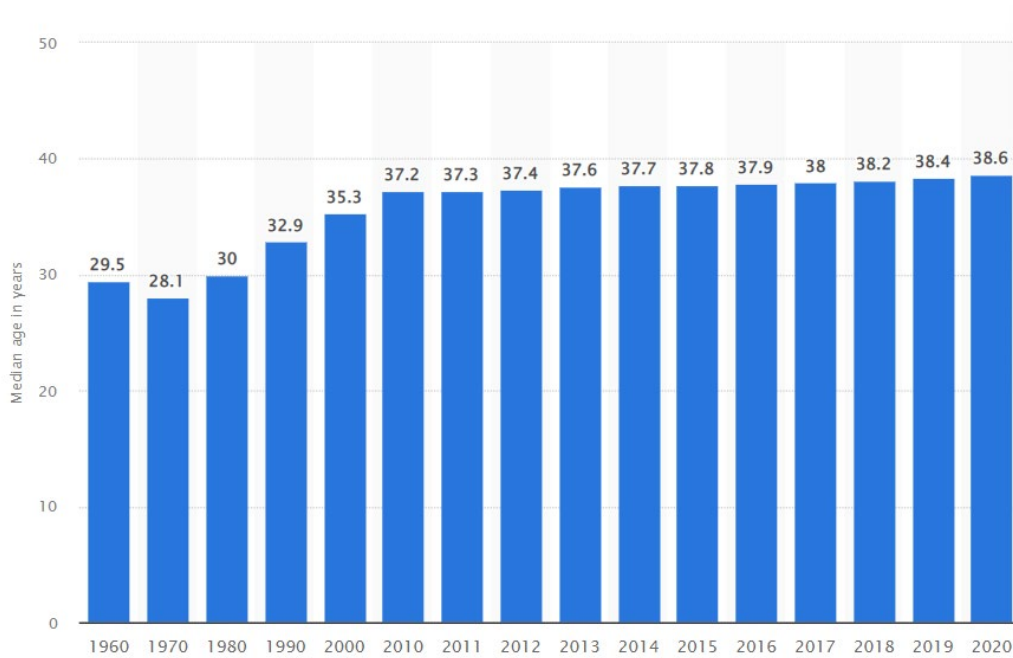
Figure 1.3 & 1.4: Social media graphics (The Creative Collective NYC, 2022) and (Livingly, n.d.)

The research team has witnessed people channel joy and resist normative hustle culture by intentionally stepping out of the bounds and playing on the playgrounds that aren't really meant for them anymore. The purpose of this story isn't to argue that adults should or should not be allowed on playgrounds; realistically, nobody is going around regulating the "intended for

ages 5-12” rule and not everyone wants to play on the swings. However, the topic of joy is important. Public spaces are just one of the ways in which joy can be barred and/or created. The incorporation of lively spaces is critical to mental health and wellbeing (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2021). Only through an interdisciplinary lens can the question be discussed: how can we rekindle the human spirit? Though there will always be individuals who resist the aforementioned dominant culture, how can we make it so people don't *have* to step out of the box to play again. With global population age on the rise, the need for public space tailored to adults is more pertinent than ever before.

According to Statista (2022), the median age of the resident population of the United States was 38.6 years in the year 2020, and this age has continually risen since the 1960s. With new technologies and advancements in healthcare, the lifespan of an average person is only projected to increase, especially in Western countries such as the United States. The United Nations even states that “as the average age of populations continues to rise, Governments should implement policies to address the needs and interests of older persons,” given that the number of older persons (individuals over 60 years) is expected to exceed the number of children under 10 by 2030 (United Nations Economic & Social Affairs, 2017). As the lifespans of people are extended, urban designers must seek new ways to design for and with working adults to ensure that the lives lived are not only longer but filled with life and meaning.

Table 1.1: Median age of the resident population of the United States from 1960 to 2020



Source: Statista (2022)

The issue of an aging population is compounded when thinking about the trajectory of society, labor, and lifestyles overall. Longer lifetimes have long meant prolonged retirement, questions around social security, and so forth (Vespa, 2018). Issues concerning planning the future while trying to survive in the present are undoubtedly stressors in our adult lives. In the fast-paced digital world, shaped by capitalism, consumerism, and the cycle of routinized work, it sometimes feels like a self-perpetuating cycle and a double-edged sword. People work their 40-hour weeks to buy houses, the newest goods, and lavish vacations that never fill the void. Some look towards social media to find the validation and connection that they may not have in their everyday lives (Masciotra, 2013). Da Costa (2019) argues that society is “inundated with distractions, busy-ness, and addiction to hustling” that leaves many people feeling exhausted, with 55% of Americans reporting feeling stressed about their lives. Though this may be an overgeneralization of the suburban way of life, it is a story spoken and received anecdotally far too often. The suburban form is characterized by uniformity, by nature, so it almost makes sense that the lifestyles that exist within it parallel that perspective. How do we break out of this

cyclical way of life and discover true joy and human connection once again? How do we create spaces so that these feelings are not fast fleeting? Urban design serves as one way to rekindle the human spirit through the creation of a socially inclusive, enticing, and connective built environment.

While urban centers like New York City or San Francisco may possess the funding and capacity to implement innovative and/or small placemaking initiatives around every corner, many smaller cities do not have the same potential for that scope of urban design. This often means that these smaller cities lack the dynamic, joyful spaces associated with the modern inner city. This paper focuses on design ideas for those smaller cities that are often overlooked when it comes to placemaking and transformative urban design, the cities we often call home: the suburbs, or peripheries.



Figure 1.5: New York High Line (Mattson/Shutterstock)

To summarize, though people are generally living longer thanks to 21st first century advancements in healthcare and resources, these lives aren't necessarily fulfilling. People in the suburbs especially fall into the pattern of routinized labor; it becomes easy to lose sight of the

small joys in life. Our world is characterized by a plethora of complex issues that act as stressors. Even though urban design alone won't solve all of these issues, there must be intentional space for joy, because that alleviates some of the burden. When we're happy and connected, we show up more for our community, we advocate for change, etc. We can't have resistance without rest, and joy is a critical component to it. Spaces can and should be tailored to catalyze human connection, new discoveries, and fun, for lack of better words.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The prevalence of academia around sustainable cities, resilient cities, community development, housing crises, etc. are plentiful, and rightfully so. In our ever-evolving world, there needs to be emerging solutions to new 21<sup>st</sup> century issues. Recent technologies and knowledge, new policies, and so on are essential to tackle these issues. However, sometimes we have to start small, as rudimentary as it sounds. In the book “All About Love: New Visions,” Watkins (2001) discusses how our society is absent of love, and how our return to love is essential if we are to heal as a society. In her argument, she paints love as an action that is the foundation for community and social movements, not only as something between two individuals. Building off Watkins' (2001) argument of living by a love ethic, perhaps our return and access to happy healing spaces will give people the capacity and desire to advocate for the people and communities around them.

Despite the abundance of journals discussing green spaces and nature and the correlation with mental health and wellbeing, research around urban spaces and happiness was more difficult to find. This section looks beyond traditional academia discussing how planners can create “good” cities, capable of handling 21<sup>st</sup> century issues and instead focuses on a critical component of all cities: its people. Here we attempt to synthesize existing literature on *happiness in society* with literature on *happiness and physical environments* (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2021). Though these are often treated as separate matters, with the former falling under sociology or social studies and the latter falling under urban design, the two are inextricably intertwined under public health. McCay and Roe's (2021) book “Restorative Cities: Urban Design for Mental Health and Wellbeing” brings light to this intersection with their term

“restorative urbanism.” Restorative urbanism suggests that the city bombards us, but that with intentional city planning aligned with the seven pillars (inclusive, green, blue, sensory, neighborly, active, and playable), the city can become a restorative environment (McCay and Roe, 2021).



Figure 2.1: Pillars of the restorative city (McCay & Roe, 2021)

These pillars likely sound familiar to those in the urban design and planning fields, except for one: the pillar of “play.” In the Bachelor of Science in City and Regional Planning curriculum at California Polytechnic State University specifically, students take courses on planning for multiple publics, urban design principles, and transportation, covering most of these pillars; however, play is never explicitly discussed. In the discourse of “good” urban design and design for people, the focus is often on green spaces, moveable furniture, and accessibility, which are all important elements of design, nonetheless. Given that there is a “positive relationship between green spaces and mental health in urban areas,” it is important to incorporate green spaces throughout the urban fabric (Engineer et al., 2020). Engineer et al. (2020) discusses the research done to conclude that our physical environments can shape

wellbeing and health; some of these discussions included the relationships between mental health and green space, cardiovascular risk factors and green space, neighborhood characteristics and physical activity, and green spaces and violent crime. These cases “demonstrate how the built environment directly or indirectly affects human psychology, physiology, and overall wellbeing” and further the argument that our emotions can and are shaped by the world around us (Engineer et al., 2020). Considering the correlation between health outcomes and green space, it can be argued that access to these spaces is not only a planning issue but a public health one too. “Good” planning takes this into account and there is even a recommendation of one park every half mile radius or ten acres of parkland every 1,000 residents (APA, 1965). However, there is much more to consider beyond simply adding grassy areas to an area, especially when it comes to the suburbs.

How is it that in a place of so much life and so much rest, the place where people return at the end of each day holds so much stifled spirit? Mang (2009) argues that cities are a “concentration of human power in relationship to the power of place,” but that there is increasing alienation between humans and the places in which we reside. His dissertation parallels this paper, and he argues that “when we truly experience the unique nature of living energies of a place that we come to understand it, appreciate it, and seek to enhance it” (Mang, 2009). How can we harness both human power and power of place to create a symbiotic community characterized by raw human emotions of joy? Mang (2009) argues that it starts with individual self-actualization, but in the context of society and humanity. Public spaces allow people to do just that, by enhancing one’s own well-being while being surrounded by others in the community. Mang (2009) also argues that there are six distinctive attributes to “place” as illustrated in the diagram below. Though many spaces have at least a few of these qualities, few are representative of all six. The “magnetic” attribute is a characteristic aligned with “fun” that is often lacking in suburban communities.

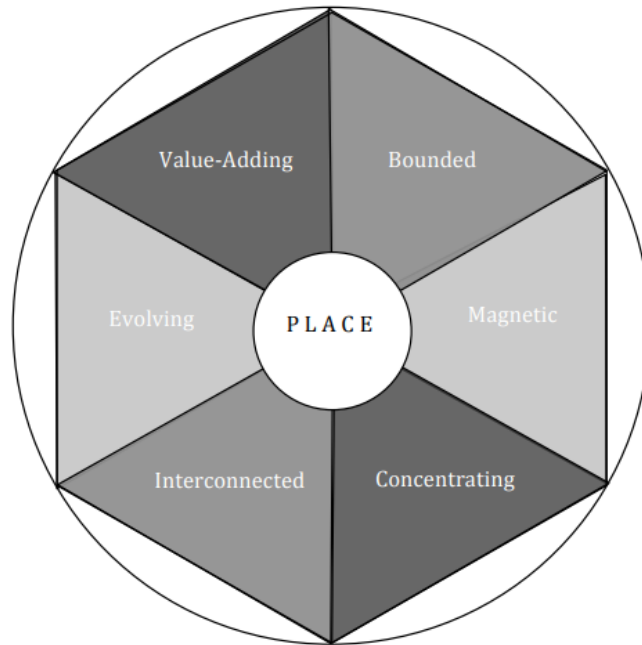


Figure 2.2: Attributes of Place (Mang, 2009)

Fun is just one of the elements to a healthier, happier life alongside community and relationship building. Price (2022) argues that fun is the secret to a healthier life and that true fun is comprised of playfulness, connection, and flow; to maximize all three of the components of fun, she encourages people to engage in activities and with people that invoke this “feeling of sunshine.” These three elements tie back into this paper as we discuss how public spaces can help foster fun through placemaking and urban design. Though placemaking is often associated with larger cities, Richards (2020) illustrates in her study of Mississauga and Surrey that the creation of community gardens in these suburban cities can foster a sense of connection between visitors, especially when they have a stake in its creation. Though these case studies were conducted in Canada and largely focused on green spaces, the following chapter provides case studies more aligned with this research topic.



## Chapter 3: Case Studies

As of 2018, the number of middle-aged people already outnumbered children (Vespa, 2018). Countries such as Japan, Germany, Italy, and Spain are much farther along this demographic path than the United States and many other countries in Western Europe are projected to follow (Vespa, 2018). With this information, the urban design examples in other countries may serve as an example for us to look at. The following case studies each illustrate elements of responsive urban design that may be useful for Campbell to consider, including one international example.

### *One Green Mile (Mumbai, India)*

One Green Mile, a public space designed by MVRDV and StudioPOD architectural firms, provides an example of how pockets for community gathering and connection can be incorporated into the most unexpected of spaces. This example highlights how even spaces that are small or previously neglected can serve as new social spaces, if intentionally designed. The main space of the project is only 200 meters. This project has typical playground elements that cater to children, including climbing bars, a small rock wall, and crawling tunnel, but also caters to adults with fun colorful tables and a series of walls and planters that cool the space and dampen noise pollution (Pintos, 2022). Though the project is located in a presumably noisy area in the city, with a highway above, these elements provide visitors with a brief respite from the chaos of daily chatter.



Figure 3.1: One Green Mile art and public seating (Merchant, 2022)



Figure 3.2 & 3.3: One Green Mile project location context (left) and creative lighting and landscaping (right) (Merchant, 2022)

This project is a pass-through point of travelers and makes use of its opportunities, just like what public spaces in Campbell's Winchester TOD will have to do. The project location itself isn't a destination, but rather an area that people will cross on their way to their destination, whether that be work, home, or recreation. There is enticing art, creative lighting, and shade that draws the attention of passerbys.

*Spruce Street Harbor Park (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)*

This waterfront public space functions “like an outdoor living room” with groves of trees, hammocks, fountains, floating gardens, and colorful lighting that illuminates the night, turning a previously neglected space into a lively hangout (Popkin, 2014).



Figure 3.4: Lounging spaces for visitors

Designed as a temporary summer park by the Groundswell Design Group, this park is considered one of the must-see destinations in Philadelphia. Though the scale and budget of this project is likely unfeasible for a smaller city such as Campbell, its design and creative programming bring innovative ideas for how spaces can be tailored for adults to enjoy.

Prior to its new programming, the project area had few visitors. Though in proximity to transportation nodes, hotels, and restaurants, it was largely underutilized. Rather than altering the landscape itself, the design took into consideration elements that could be added to the area, such as temporary businesses, recreational opportunities, and seating. Due to its popularity, Spruce Street Harbor Park is booked for reinstallation every summer until a permanent redevelopment is completed (Landezine International Landscape Award, 2014). The atmosphere in this case study

is largely created via elements that are easily removed, allowing the space to remain a dynamic canvas that can be altered to cater to community desires.

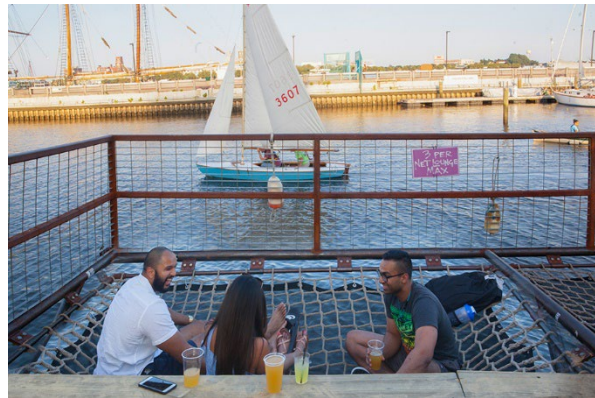


Figure 3.5 & 3.6: Programming elements (left) and creative seating (right) at Spruce Street Harbor Park

### Gibson Mariposa Park (El Monte, California)

Gibson Mariposa Park, designed by Amigos de los Rios, initially began as a community campaign with fifth grade students asking for a neglected space to be converted into a park. The result was a park equipped with a water playground, basketball courts, picnic areas, a small amphitheater, education areas, jog path, and restrooms (Amigos de los Rios, 2012).

Though smaller in scale compared to the larger urban parks and waterfronts, Gibson Mariposa Park is a bright, eye-catching spectacle suitable for suburban El Monte. It is located in a relatively secluded area bordering a train line and within a low-density housing neighborhood. Minutes away from Valley Boulevard (a major arterial street of the area), the park serves not only the residents that can walk from within the neighborhood, but those who may pass through. This park is more likely designed for children and teenagers, given the initial push from elementary school students, but this case study serves as an example of how placemaking initiatives don't always have to be grand. As someone who is also from the San Gabriel Valley, I stumbled upon this park while attempting to navigate my way home from an auto shop and was immediately drawn to it by the creative shade structures. This illustrates how pops of color, or

things that people just don't see every day can inspire a sense of curiosity or wonder. In addition, Gibson Mariposa Park provides an example of how a city can respond to the requests of its residents with the help of local nonprofits, such as Amigos de los Rios in this example.



Figure 3.7: View of shade structures and playground at Gibson Mariposa Park

## Chapter 4: Context and Rationale

Though the issues that prompted this research topic pervade our society, focusing on a single city allows for a more specific vision for implementation. The City of Campbell, California will be discussed for the purpose of this paper. In Urban Design Studio III (CRP 341), the entire studio worked on a joint project for the City of Campbell. The project resulted in eight alternative design concepts for the Winchester District, a corridor planned for redevelopment into a transit-oriented development (TOD) to incorporate retail, housing, and transportation. These alternatives and more information were compiled into our final product titled “Urban Design Visions, Winchester District, Campbell, CA” that can be viewed on the City’s website and is linked in the references below. Much of the following site information is from this previously done collaborative work. In each of the eight alternatives proposed to the Community

Development Department, there was a public space component included. This provides an opportunity for the City of Campbell to incorporate interactive urban design elements in any alternative. There is no final design for the Winchester District as of July 2022, though the City has been working with the Valley Transit Authority (VTA) on a design that incorporates affordable housing where there is currently a bus loop. Given the plans to redevelop and how the City of Campbell is an example of a largely suburban middle-class community, implementing a project here would allow us to see what placemaking for joy can look like in a suburban context.

### Location

The City of Campbell is located in Santa Clara County, approximately 50 miles south of San Francisco. Considered part of the Silicon Valley and in proximity to major freeways, the city is attractive to working adults who may not want to pay the housing prices of more populated cities in the Bay (City of Campbell, 2022).

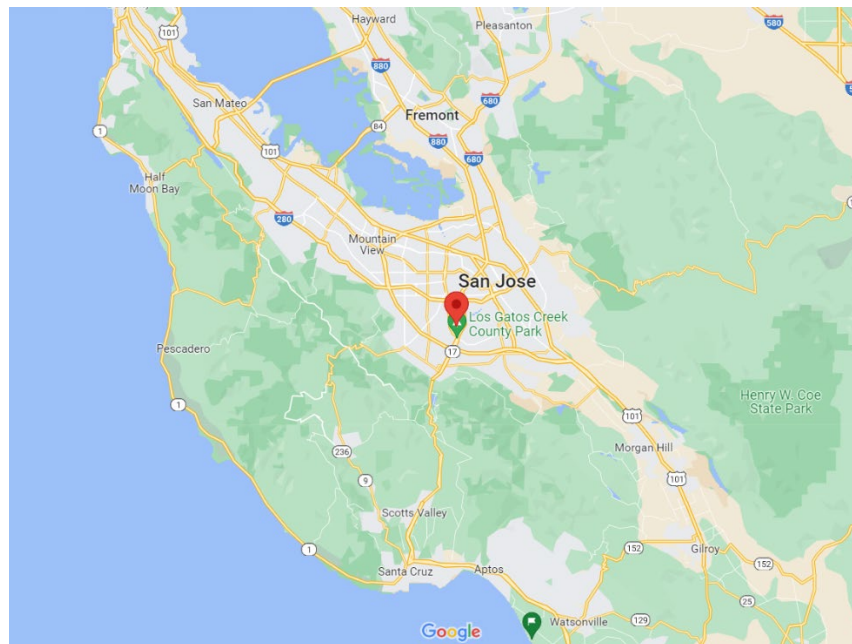


Figure 4.1: Campbell regional location in relation to the Bay Area

The project area intended for transformation into a TOD is located along Winchester Boulevard and the existing Winchester Station of the VTA line. It is currently a developed low-density commercial area with retail, restaurants, and other services including Safeway, Dollar Tree, Summer Winds Nursery, and St. Lucy Parish. Most of the project area is currently shared surface parking for existing commercial. There are trees that provide shade to cars scattered around the parking lot, but no green space otherwise. According to the American Community 5-year Survey and U.S. Census Bureau (2022), household and employment growth in the Winchester District from 2010-2020 was 0.8079 percent and 7.22 percent, respectively, so there is a market for a new TOD to be built.



Figure 4.2: Winchester TOD District project area

Demographic

Like much of the Silicon Valley, Campbell has seen an influx in the number of working adults as the technology industry expands. The population of Campbell has been on the rise, with a population of 41,946 people in 2020 (City of Campbell, 2022). The largest demographic of households in the area were those without children, comprising 53 percent of the total 6,906

households surveyed. The American Community 5-Year Survey (2021) provided data from which the following demographics were calculated in CRP 341. Compared to Santa Clara County overall, “the half-mile radius around both the VTA Winchester and VTA Downtown stations have a higher concentration of non-family households, households with no kids, and householders ages 25-34” (City of Campbell, 2022). This further illustrates that more placemaking and recreational opportunities for populations other than children should be incorporated in public spaces, to reflect the demographics that exist within. Especially with the knowledge that this area will be transformed into a TOD, working adults from these households could benefit from urban design elements that catch their eye or serve as a break from their commute when going to or returning from work.

Table 4.1: TOD Demographics

<b>TOD Demographics</b>	<b>Winchester</b>	<b>% of Winchester Households</b>	<b>Location Quotient Winchester</b>	<b>Downtown</b>	<b>% of Downtown Households</b>	<b>Location Quotient Downtown</b>
Non-Family Households (2019)	2,302	47.85%	1.70	2,978	51.68%	1.83
Households with no Kids (2019)	3,669	76.26%	1.20	4,574	79.38%	1.25
Householders 25 – 34 (2010)	565	10.65%	2.44	635	10.85%	2.49
Householders 55 – 64 (2010)	370	6.98%	0.58	365	6.24%	0.52

Source: Urban Design Visions Winchester District Campbell, CA (2022)



### City Information

While reviewing the City’s General Plan, three of the community design policies were to create vibrant, accessible public space, to encourage gathering and community, and to build pocket parks into new and existing development (City of Campbell, 2022). These policies tie into the desire to create public spaces that allow community members to flourish. The City also “strives to provide open space, park land, recreational facilities, and school open space within walking distance (one-half mile) of all residents” (City of Campbell, 2022). Though the Winchester District is already located within half a mile of an existing park (John D. Morgan Park), the increase in residents in the area if affordable housing were to be created would be a good opportunity to incorporate these spaces nearby.

A stakeholder meeting between the students of the CRP 341 and City of Campbell Councilmembers, and representatives from the VTA, Campbell Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Campbell Historic Preservation Board revealed that the City and its residents strongly value community. They also revealed that the demographic of Campbell has changed over the last few years with an increase in younger professionals (City of Campbell, 2022). Additional community surveys revealed that residents favored expansion of public spaces, with community gardens and playgrounds garnering the most support at 52 percent and 44 percent respectively (City of Campbell, 2022). This information supports the idea that suburban Campbell could benefit from creative placemaking solutions and suggests that community members and existing policies are receptive to the proposition. Though Campbell is largely a middle-class suburban community with existing open spaces, the city may have enough resources to consider more creative measures.

## Chapter 5: Recommendation

Relating these lessons from the aforementioned case studies back to Campbell, California, we can see that it doesn't take much to activate spaces. By simply incorporating programmatic elements that invite passersby to engage in the space, people naturally gravitate towards them. The images below provide some ideas that may be incorporated into the public spaces associated with Campbell's new TOD neighborhood, along with a discussion of how they align with the previous case studies.

As learned from Spruce Street Harbor Park in Philadelphia, not all urban design elements have to be permanent to be successful. Though Spruce Street Harbor Park is a larger space turned yearly event/spectacle, the notion of programming elements that temporarily occupy public spaces is useful and may require less funds compared to continual upkeep of a space. Elements found in the project "The Lawn on D Street" is an example of such spontaneous programming. As opposed to the Spruce Street Harbor Park, this project comprised of a swing set for adults on the grass and ping pong tables bordering the walkways. These programmatic elements are appropriate for the City of Campbell given that each of the eight previously proposed design alternatives incorporated a large green space. Rather than designing a park with the specific intent of catering to working adults, this alternative allows the space to be used in multiple ways. The space itself does not have to change, only the programming. Similarly, Seoul's Urban Pinball Machine is a pop-up experience created for passerbys to engage in urban play. As previously stated, the community expressed desire for playgrounds (City of Campbell, 2022). Perhaps the simplest approach of all would be flexible designs like these for Campbell, especially given that no project is ever guaranteed success. Like Spruce Street Harbor Park, if these events and elements are well received by the community, Campbell could later implement a more permanent design.



Figures 5.1 & 5.2: The Lawn on D Street adult swings (left) and ping pong table (right) (Flint, 2014)



Figure 5.3: Seoul Urban Pinball Machine (Abdel, 2021)

Less grand elements can still increase use of a space, especially when it comes to seating and shade strategies. As noted with El Monte’s Gibson Mariposa Park, shade structures can be made to be landmarks as well. The pop-up park seating and canopies at Városháza Park combine both the flexibility of the previous examples with the functionality of shade. More grand programming draws attention to play, which was the original intention of this paper, however if the City of Campbell seeks less disruptive programming to ease citizens into more eye-catching elements, this can be a way to incrementally do so. An additional benefit to this strategy is that if this design does not prove useful in the TOD, shade structures can always be used elsewhere as opposed to larger displays of urban play.



Figure 5.4: Városháza Park, Budapest, Hungary (Ruas, 2019)

Permanent urban design elements, in contrast to programming, have the ability to characterize an area. The examples below would allow Campbell residents and workers to identify the TOD as an area where they can lounge or partake in a quick bounce on the way to the transit station. Both elements do not require large amounts of space compared to some of the previous suggestions and are easily recognizable from afar. While there is no view of the water

from the Winchester project area, permanent swings along retail facades bordering public plazas or paseos could allow people to people-watch and/or take in their surroundings in a creative and different way than what they are used to.



Figure 5.5: Urban elements for children (Pinterest)



Figure 5.6: Waterfront bench swings at Pier 35, East River, NYC (McKnight, 2019)

The overall recommendation for Campbell is to incorporate creative elements that are different than what the community already has. These examples provide a model that the City can use for inspiration, but it should be noted that truly engaging public spaces are always responsive to the community's unique needs. What works for one project may not work for another, and creative placemaking cannot be copied as it would negate the "creative" qualifier. People find fun in things that are different and communal.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The Campbell Winchester District provides an opportunity to transform even suburban public spaces into lively hubs of life, laughter, and community. The existing plan to redevelop the area into a transit-oriented development (TOD) makes it an even greater possibility if the funding allows. This project can help not only Campbell but suburban communities across the United States make strides in civic engagement, community, and public health by modeling what community members can do when they are inspired.

Play is a critical component of restorative urban design, as previously presented, and in a society that is stressed and constantly working, holistic and intentional urban design has the power to restore and heal populations. Joy is a fundamental facet of the human experience and essential to the well-being of individuals in every city. The case studies ranging from California to India all demonstrate that there are simple ways urban design can be used to entice and invite passerbys to step out of the confines of their daily lives and enjoy the brief respite.

While including programmatic elements throughout a public space won't solve society's most pressing issues, rekindling the human spirit and by allowing people to rest, play, and exult in all that life has to offer is critical. In the case of the suburban City of Campbell, perhaps only small changes can be accomplished, given the presumed smaller budget compared to some of the large cities discussed in case studies. For further discussion, potential for future research includes diving into placemaking opportunities that are more fiscally feasible and/or working alongside sociologists and psychologists to determine what public spaces are beneficial from those perspectives. This paper largely focuses on visioning ideas for the area, given that the

collaboration process with the City of Campbell during Urban Design Studio III largely focused on an overall corridor design. A more comprehensive discussion looking into the City's General Fund and other budgetary considerations would be beneficial in the future. Beyond Campbell itself, an expansion in the world of academia surrounding healing and restorative spaces should be considered. Though McCay and Roe (2021) provide a solid foundation for this discussion, given their backgrounds in environmental psychology, psychiatry, and public health prior to urban design, a more comprehensive discussion including city officials and "regular" people may be beneficial. While this discussion is complex and can quickly crystallize into a web of overlapping discussions/issues, that is exactly what is needed: discussion, inquiry, healing, etc. – but it starts with people having the capacity to do so; it starts with joy and happiness that replenishes us.

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*Key Words*

Consumerism, joy, and suburbs	Psychology of communal spaces
Suburban planning and public spaces	Suburbs and happiness
Connection, suburbs, and joy	Happiness and placemaking
Suburban life sociology	Happiness and play

Happiness and society

Pursuit of happiness and aging

Public spaces Europe

Urban play

European urban design plazas play adults

Routinized work and life satisfaction

Urban planning suburban public spaces

Urban design placemaking case studies

Lack of sense of place in the suburbs

Alienation in suburbs

Lifelessness in suburbs

Lack of joy in capitalist society

Suburbanization isolation and despair

Built environment and happiness

Designing for connection

Designing for joy

Everyday happiness

Collective urban play

Restorative cities

Restorative urbanism