

# DESIGN STUDIO FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

Fall 2022

Client: University Crossing Public Improvement District

**How might we improve the quality of life through reimagining land use for the University Crossing community?**

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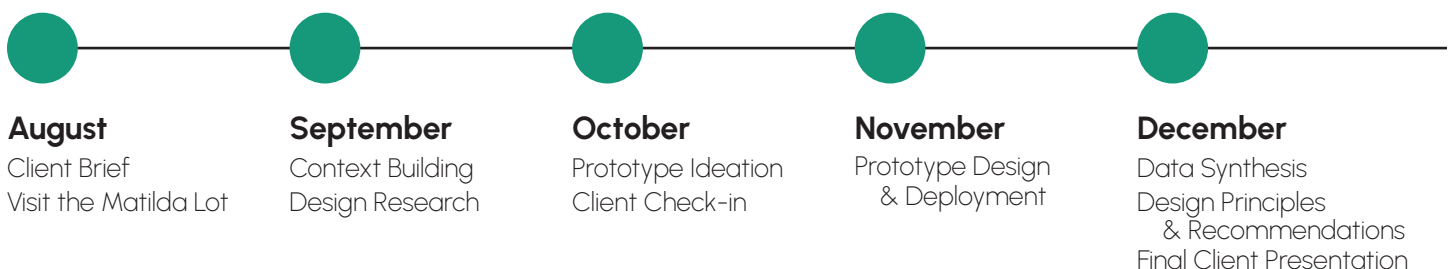
## DESIGN RESEARCH PROCESS

At the beginning of the Fall 2022 semester, two student design teams implemented a Human-Centered Design approach to answer the question: How might we improve the quality of life through reimagining land use for the University Crossing community?

This project aimed to provide the University Crossing Public Improvement District with community-based evidence to inform future design improvements to the Matilda Lot. These design research efforts focused on generating specific feedback of what the community might want to see in this space if it were to be reimagined.

After building initial context and understanding specific to this project, the student design teams employed several community engagement efforts including observations, neighborhood canvassing, multiple surveys, and interviews with key community stakeholders and subject matter experts in landscape architecture, public spaces, and placemaking. Following an extensive research phase, the teams presented several initial prototype concepts to the client for feedback. From there, the teams designed and deployed a final prototype to continue to learn more about specific ideas and concepts within the space that would inform design principles and future recommendations for the project overall.

## PROJECT TIMELINE



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## DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS

To learn more about the Matilda Lot, who used the Matilda Lot, and what the community might want for the future of this space, the design teams conducted primary qualitative research using several different design methods.

### **Observation**

Experiencing University Crossing programming - Music on Mockingbird

Experiencing University Crossing public art

Visiting with JM Rizzi

Visiting University Crossing businesses

Walking the University Crossing Trail

### **Expert Interviews**

Brad Cheves, Southern Methodist University

Annette Eastman, CBRE

Krista Nightengale, Better Block Foundation

Matt Omundson, Glenstar Properties

Risa Renna, Mockingbird Elementary Site-Based Decision Making Committee

Courtney Shelton, Mockingbird Elementary Site-Based Decision Making Committee

Lawrence Ward, Oncor

Taber Wetz, Mockingbird Elementary Dads' Club

### **Neighborhood Engagement & Survey**

2 weekends canvassing

10+ hours invested

133 homes visited

32 doorstep conversations

46 survey responses

3 email conversations

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

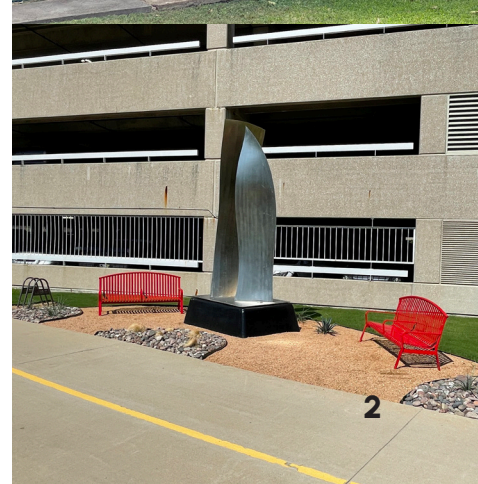
Across all research efforts, the design teams distilled what they heard into the below key learnings to help inform their prototype direction.

1) The Matilda Lot is currently being used primarily by residents of the North Stonewall Terrace neighborhood who are dog owners, families with children, and general walkers.

2) Community members are interested in improvements to the Matilda Lot but would prefer if these improvements maintained the current use of the space as open and flexible.

3) An underlying goal of the community is improving the feeling of safety in University Crossing, and the Matilda Lot could be used to support this effort.

4) Investment in the Matilda Lot could lay the groundwork to support future investment in the University Crossing Trail and the amenities along the trail.





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## PROTOTYPE

The culminating effort was the Matilda Lot Community Event on Saturday, November 19, 2022 from 10am to 1pm. This designed event included adding temporary improvements to the Matilda Lot and provided the design teams with an opportunity to learn more about three overarching questions.

- 1) Do enhancements to the edges improve visitors' feelings of safety in and invitation to the Matilda Lot?
- 2) What specific park-like elements do visitors want to see in the interior of the Matilda Lot?
- 3) Would the community be interested in low-impact programming such as community cleanup days?

To help answer these questions, the design teams designed, built, and installed temporary improvements including benches, planters, bollards, and a painted entrance crosswalk. At the event, the design teams engaged participants in a site plan co-design activity and an organized trash cleanup activity.



## PROTOTYPE IMPLEMENTATION & FINDINGS

The design teams engaged in more than 30 detailed conversations from the Matilda Lot Community Event and reviewed 16 additional survey responses to develop the below prototype findings.

- 1) The neighborhood is interested in low-impact improvements that maintain the integrity of the current use of the space (open and flexible) and align with the current aesthetic of the space (natural and raw).
- 2) Survey respondents overwhelmingly felt entrance additions such as a crosswalk and bollards made the space feel more welcoming.
- 3) When asked if they felt safe, welcome, part of a community, engaged, and likely to return after spending time in the space with these temporary improvements, the majority of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
- 4) 100 percent of survey respondents would be interested in participating in, rather than planning or organizing, future Matilda Lot cleanups.



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## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

From the prototype learnings, the design team developed the following four design principles to help guide any decisions around the future of the Matilda Lot.

- 1) Addressing the perimeter edges of the space would make the space more welcoming.
- 2) Improvements to the interior of the Matilda Lot should support visitor's current flexible use of the space and compliment it as a natural space.
- 3) A thoughtful and comprehensive maintenance plan is required for the long-term success of any improvements.
- 4) The North Stonewall Terrace neighborhood should be considered as an active community member and stakeholder for future plans of the space.

## DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvements should maintain the integrity of the space's current use (flexible and open) while aligning with the current visual aesthetic (natural and raw).

### ***Address the Edges***

- 1) Replace bollards
- 2) Clean up and address the bridge underpass
- 3) Address the fence line and tree line along DART
- 4) Paint a mural on the Matilda Street bridge wall

### ***Enhance the Interior***

- 5) Install low-impact improvements such as benches and planters
- 6) Add low-impact landscaping (trees, grasses)
- 7) Add a walking path around the perimeter
- 8) Consider natural play elements for children

### ***Implement Ongoing Maintenance***

- 9) Add and service University Crossing trash cans
- 10) Add and service dog waste receptacles
- 11) Partner with North Stonewall Terrace to organize community cleanups

### ***Engage the Community***

- 12) Maintain an open line of communication with North Stonewall Terrace
- 13) Involve North Stonewall Terrace in future conversations around the Matilda Lot

