

## Small Scale Big Impact: Connecting Communities to the Urban Landscape through Neighborhood Parks

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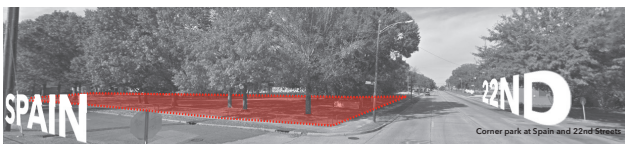
Public spaces like neighborhood parks help communities thrive and often anchor the daily lives of residents – especially kids. Most mid-size American cities house hundreds of these parks in their urban cores, yet their design, programming, and potential to impact underserved communities is often overlooked. Municipal park systems tend to focus on large parks and broad-reaching amenities like zoos and sports facilities, while ignoring the inherent value in neighborhood parks as venues for community engagement and a locus for connecting people. Small parks are an incredibly valuable asset to thriving cities.

The project shown is based in the Mid City area of Baton Rouge, Louisiana – and explores the role of the park in bringing people together around their common geography, history, and culture. The project, called IAMMIDCITY, began with a 3rd-grade curriculum at two local public elementary schools that focused on the history, geography, and culture of the Mid City area. The students made maps, laid out timelines, and took photos to document how they see Mid City. They were also given small wood cutouts that read “#IAMMIDCITY,” as part of a corresponding social media and branding campaign for the area. At the end of the school year, the photos found themselves in the heart of a local park situated between the two schools as part of an installation also dubbed IAMMIDCITY.

For the installation, the photos were printed and laminated on composite metal panels and installed in a grid in the basketball court at the park. In the process, the design team met local kids, parents, and neighbors who use the park every day. Some helped with the installation and recognized friends, family, or even themselves in the photos. This revealed just how vital the park was to the neighborhood. The design team began to walk the streets to meet more residents and talk to businesses owners. Spending a lot of time in the area allowed the team to genuinely get to know the neighborhood and opened up a dialogue about what residents would like to see in the park. The team began relaying those needs to a representative from the local parks system, which inspired them to approach administrators about funding some much-needed park improvements. Little

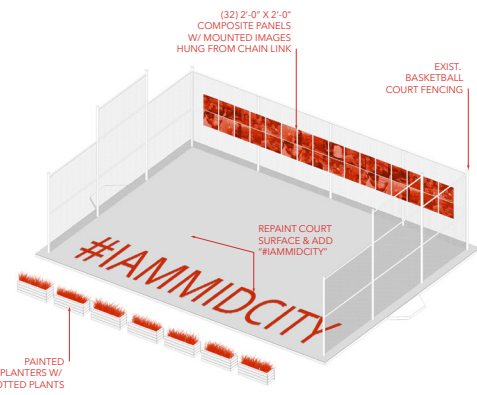
did we know that it would create a lasting collaboration with the parks system and the neighborhood to improve the park.

As a result, the parks system assembled some possible improvement options to discuss with residents such as new play equipment, community planter boxes, benches, and maybe even some mural walls. The project team facilitated meetings with the parks system and residents to design some hands-on opportunities for participation in the improvements. To create a truly community-designed park, it's critical to build sincere relationships and empower residents to shape their communities as they grow and change. Construction began this fall and is expected to be complete early next year.

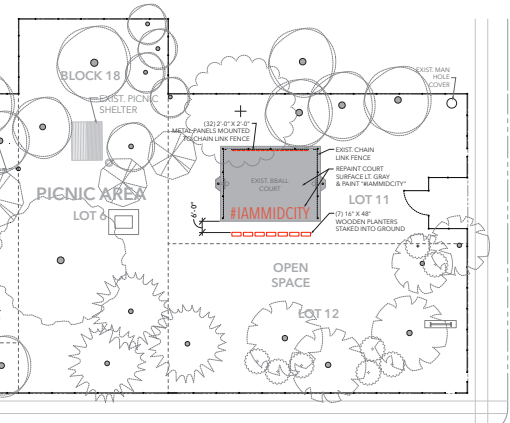


# SMALL SCALE BIG IMPACT

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1 SITE PLAN  
NTS

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