

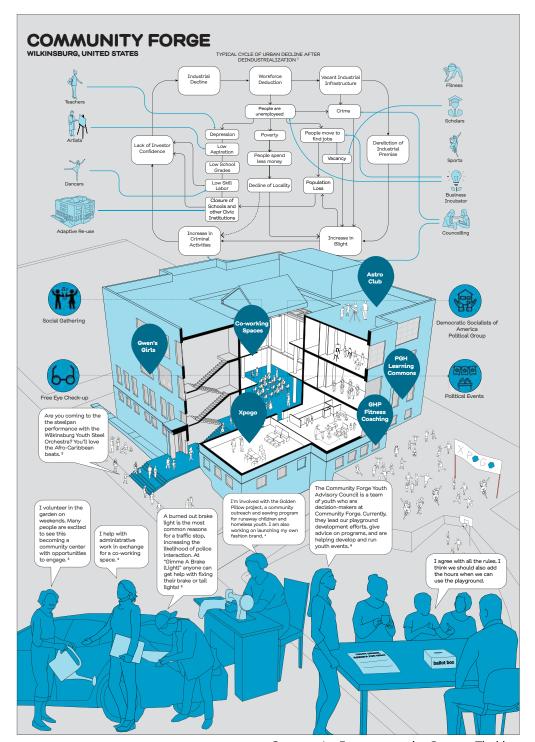
## **Urban Acupuncture for Community Forge**

In Spring 2019, the Urban Collaboratory Studio at Carnegie Mellon's School of Architecture worked with Community Forge, a citizen-led initiative that is transforming Wilkinsburg's former vacant school into a community and youth center. Community Forge is committed to youth empowerment, community collaboration, organizational incubation and neighborhood wellbeing. Together with community members, both young and old, the studio began transforming the former school yard into a shared resource for the wider neighborhood. In weekly participatory design workshops with Community Forge's youth throughout the semester the studio supported the development of ideas and their translation into a coherent design strategy.

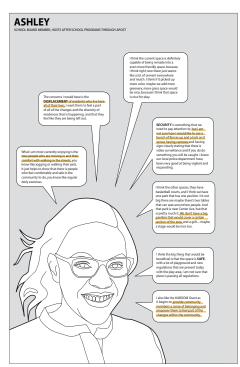
The resulting urban design framework proposes an archipelago of islands programmed for diverse activities. The islands will be implemented incrementally over time, depending on funding and volunteer work. Aiming at setting the transformation in motion, the studio realized the first island "the field" that integrates games and sports in an educational landscape, as well as furniture elements sprinkled across the site. Here design-build is not primarily concerned with delivering a final product—but in fact explores design as a tactical and performative tool for encouraging community engagement and setting in motion an incremental transformation process.

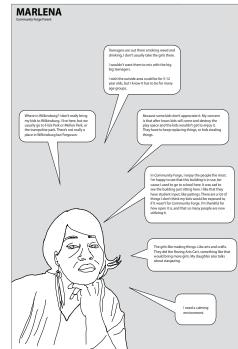
Overall, the studio offers fourth and fifth year BArch students an opportunity to see a very small project through from conception to realization within only 15 weeks, and combine abstract systemic thinking with very concrete and hands-on action. In a collaborative setting, students go from exploring and analyzing the urban milieu of Wilkinsburg, to facilitating participatory design workshops with the community, to developing and implementing a strategic design intervention that promises to act as an urban catalyst for the neighborhood revitalization—in short Acupuncture Urbanism.

Engaging with the community in an intensive co-design process teaches students to communicate their ideas clearly and the responsibility to advance design proposition that are in fact feasible within real budgetary and time constraints. In turn the youth from Community Forge experience that they can have agency in shaping the built environment and change the neighborhood they live in. The method of urban acupuncture focuses on achieving tangible result quickly, in order to avoid planning fatigue common in disinvested communities. The experience of actual change within a short time span and minimal means is essential for building trust. While the proposed phasing strategy allows for incremental implementation, the acceptance and excitement within the community has been phenomenal and has led to a sustained effort to realize the overall vision. Since the spring studio, volunteers have begun to realize the playground island. In Fall 2019 another design-build studio is developing the design and details for the Red Porch. All parts implemented thus far have been instantly appropriated by the community and have significantly increased the use of the outdoors, as well as an awareness for activities happening inside the Forge.



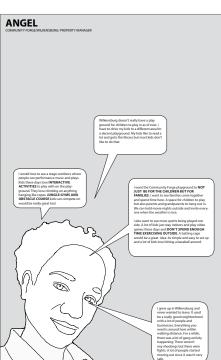
Community Forge poster by Gautam Thakkar

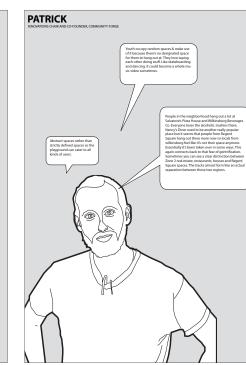


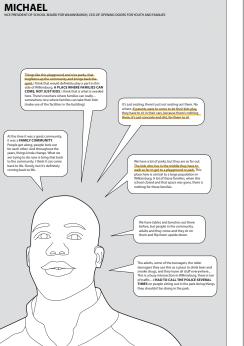












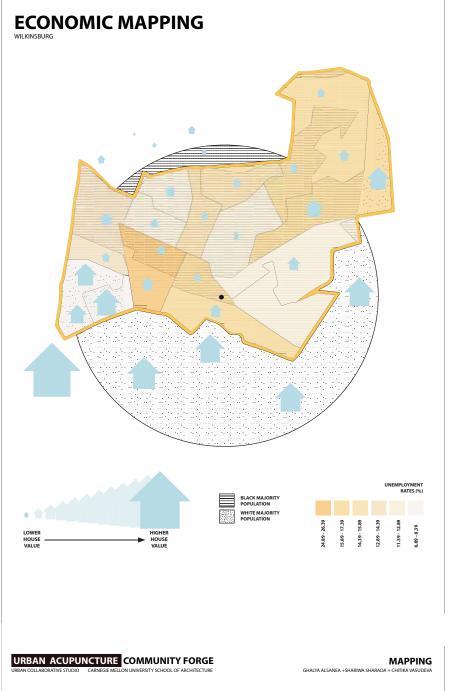


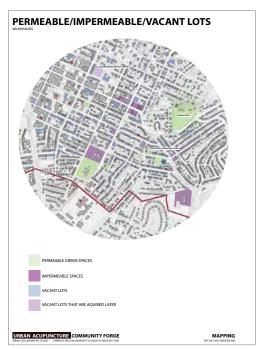
Excerpts from semi-structured interviews with 25 community members

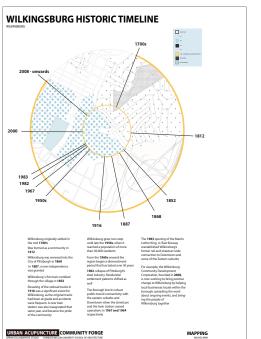


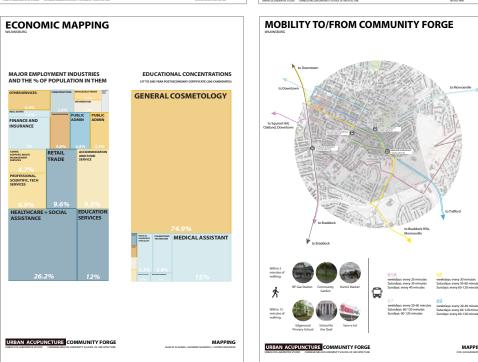
Impressions from weekly community engagement sessions with a focus on youth

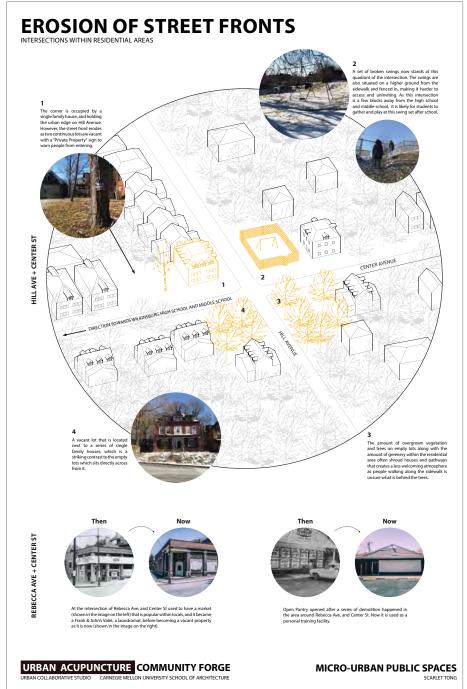




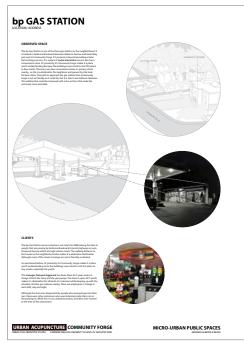


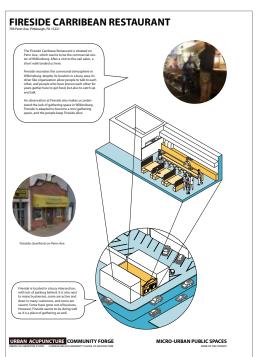


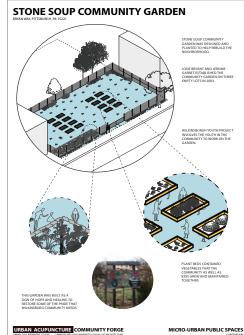












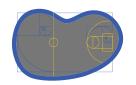


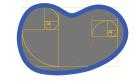










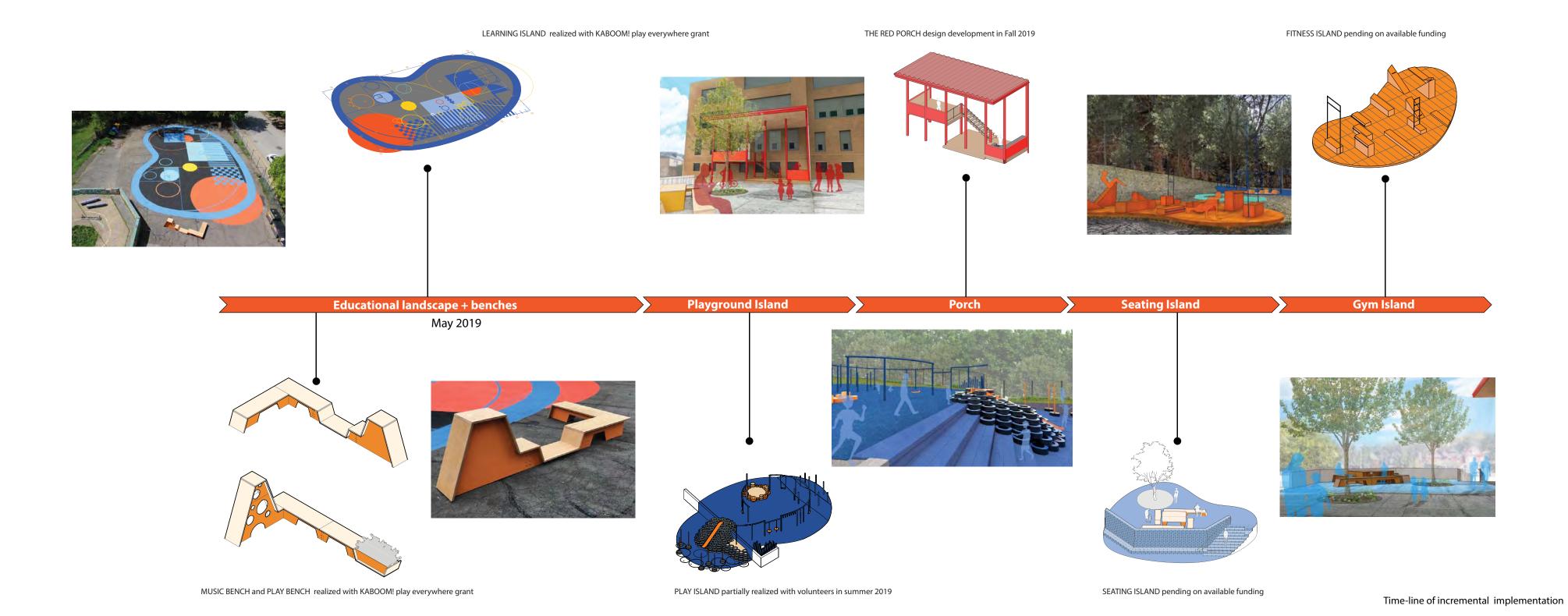
















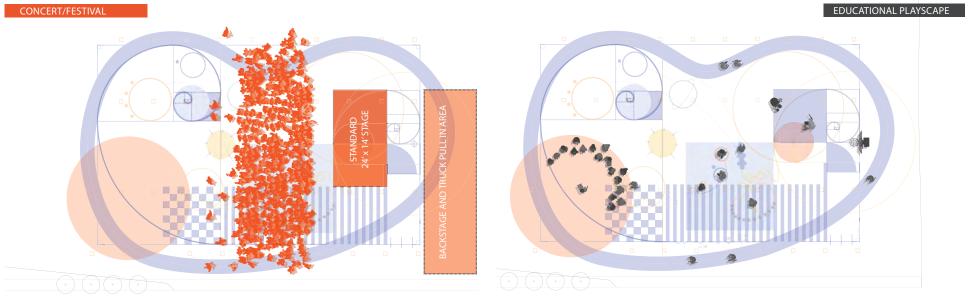


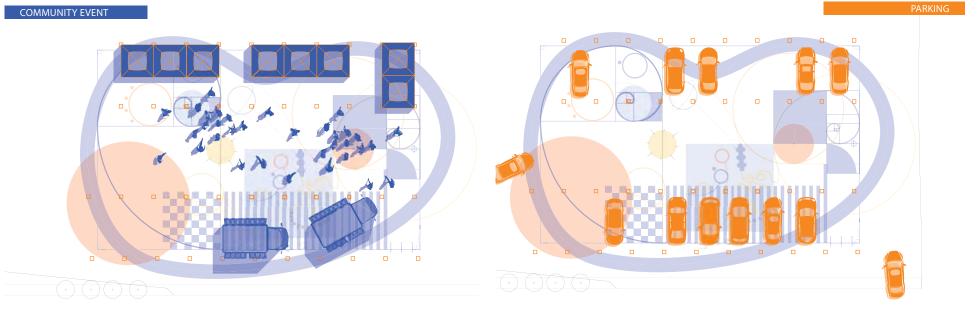


Diverse feedback sessions: *upper left* session with engineers without borders / *upper right* stress tests of bench prototype with xpogo *Lower left* midterm review / *lower righ*t feedback at community barbecue









Programming scenarios for diverse events



