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LYNNBROOK PARK PUBLIC ART ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Public Art Chattanooga
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The Lynnbrook Park Public Art Engagement Report details the creative engagement efforts throughout the Oak Ridge neighborhood and Chattanooga communities on behalf of Public Art Chattanooga to inform an art project for the space in the forthcoming Lynnbrook Park. The input from residents connected to the park space will guide how public art might culturally and intentionally activate the park as a shared public space while expressing and celebrating the local community's identity, values, and sense of place.

BACKGROUND

The series of engagements for informing and inspiring the Lynnbrook Park space began in the summer of 2018 and continued into early 2019. With a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Trust for Public Land commissioned an artist-led creative team to connect with residents through a series of project-based engagements, as well as natural and open-ended discussions concerning their ideas, aspirations, and concerns for a public space. The team focused on engagement that would comfortably and creatively invite resident's stories and experiences of past; and current engagements with parks and public spaces with the aim to translate these experiences into a vision for the future development of the Lynnbrook Park. The series of engagements (including interactions with food, art, and play) culminated in a *Fiesta* where the community enjoyed live music, food, and shared company, while participating in interactive pieces that asked their input for ideas based on the stories collected over the course of the engagement. The data and ideas inspired a *Design Sketchbook*, which the Trust for Public Land provided to the City of Chattanooga to use in conceptualizing the current park under development.

To inform the role of public art on the site, the plan for engagement through the Chattanooga Creators program under Public Art Chattanooga (PAC), the City's public art division, was modeled on the activities and facilitation that had already proved to resonate with the community. With an emerging narrative of engagement, sketchbook design, and a park engineering plan set, the process of engagement for public art would initially provide updates to residents on the progress of the future park, while inviting their memories, experiences, and inspirations with art in public spaces to inspire and advance a vision for art in Lynnbrook.

Not long after plans and a timeline for engagement were set in late 2019 and early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown delayed park development and public engagement throughout the year. Communication with PAC and the City's division of Parks and Outdoors remained constant throughout the lockdown and continued as vaccines and distancing measures allowed the public to safely engage amid the lingering pandemic. However, the pandemic also

illuminated the challenges of staying in contact with community; particularly when there are limits of access to shared spaces, digital platforms, and channels of communication. While cautiously re-emerging and reconnecting with the Oak Grove community and residents who've inspired the park design, the public art engagement process has focused on safety, intimacy, and intentionality.

OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS AND FRAMEWORK

The Opportunity Analysis provides an overview of the community's vision for the public art in Lynnbrook Park, as informed by their engagement with the current space and the future plans. The Analysis provides recommendations for how to best integrate engagement efforts with the public art opportunities within Lynnbrook Park as it undergoes development and construction.

The Opportunity Framework serves as a guide for PAC, and various partnering agencies, in the implementation and activation of public art in the Lynnbrook Park space. The Framework provides an overview of themes and ideas that were consistent throughout engagement with residents.

APPROACH

While navigating the public health risks of the pandemic, the Creative Strategist engagement approach shifted from an events-and-gathering-based model to socially distanced interactions at sites with appropriate proximity to Lynnbrook. From the classroom, to local business, to the front porch, the spaces of engagement provided familiarity with Lynnbrook, while inviting ideas and perspectives for public art that would resonate with the culture of the existing communal fixtures in the community.

PROCESS

The engagement process took a 3-prong approach, engaging students at East Side Elementary (the closest school to Lynnbrook Park), presenting pop-up engagements at spaces and businesses tangential to the park site (including markets and the park space itself), and interviews with residents who have lived in Oak Grove from 1 year to 30 years.

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

EAST SIDE ELEMENTARY WORKSHOPS

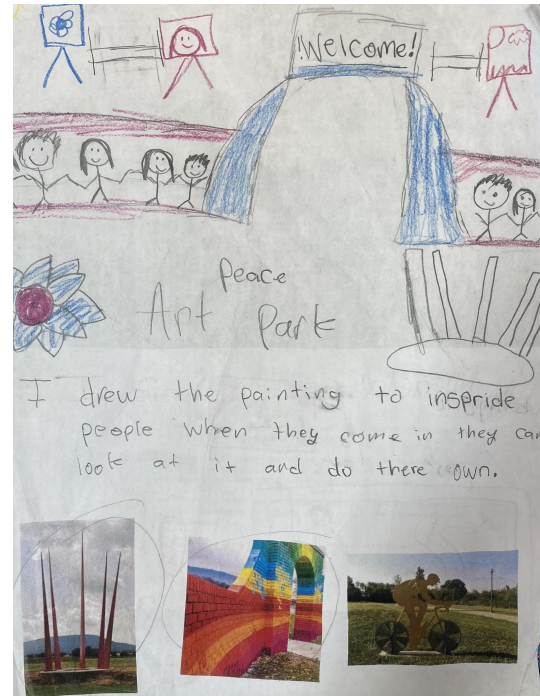
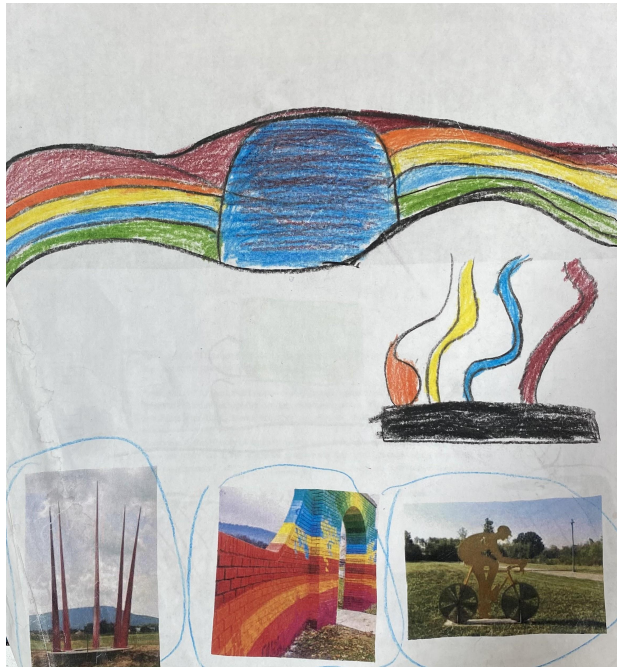
On May 25, 2021, East Side Elementary allowed access for a day of workshops with 4th grade students (from ages 9 to 10) who were introduced to a brief history of the site and the plans for the park, and were invited to imagine and inspire public art for the site. The workshops were facilitated in collaboration with an educator and in accordance with all social distance and masking protocol as required by the Hamilton County School System. From zoning data, and discussions with teachers and students, it was apparent that most workshop participants live within a few to several miles of the future park and within walking distance. Through discussing the students' and East Side's proximity to the park space, and unpacking the importance of a community's influence over the spaces and developments it shares, students received encouragement to visualize and share ideas for the park space with a sense of investment and communal ownership.

The input collected comes from 2 separate workshops which both engaged students with visuals of Lynnbrook, while prompting their ideas through different means. In the first workshop, students saw images of the current space, past engagement on the space, and plans for the park, and were provided images of examples of public art in other Chattanooga parks. The examples included figurative sculpture/marker (Jim Collins's Riverwalk Milemarker sculptures), mural (Eduardo Mendieta's "Embrace the Future, Remember the Past" in Milliken Park), and abstract sculpture (Doug Schatz's "River City Queen" in Sculpture Fields at Montague Park). After discussing the current examples of public art and their distinctions, students used images of the Lynnbrook space to match the form of work they liked best for the space, while also adding notes and ideas for the themes and subject matter of the future art.



Some students also took the option of circling, marking, and noting the existing public art example that they preferred for Lynnbrook. In the second workshop, students also engaged with the art examples and visuals of the park, but participated in a drawing activity through which they replicated the Lynnbrook landscape as seen from 17th Street, and then placed their own art

ideas in their drawings. The following data reflects shared themes and various ideas in descending order of popularity from 40 students, beginning with specific input and quotes pertaining to the Mural/Painting to the next popular choices of figurative then abstract sculpture, and popular themes originating with students and original ideas.



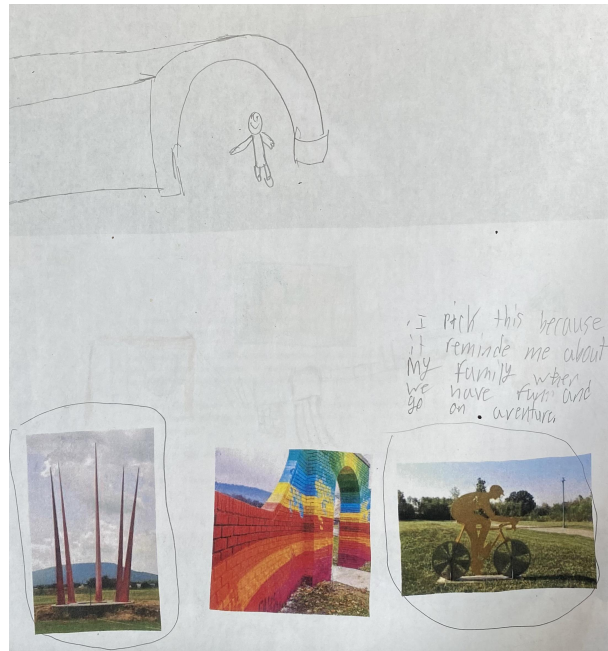
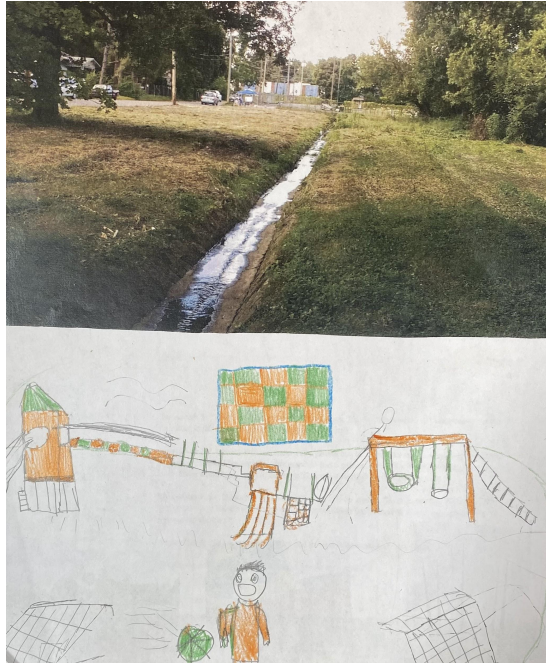
Mural

“I choose this because it will give kids time to see [sic] details...”

“I want...when grandparents come it reminds them [of when they were] a child.”

“I want it to be about relaxing...and fun...adults to focus on their kids”

[Mural as Welcome] Sign: “[Use] Colors [to] represent my feelings [and] actions!”



Figurative Sculpture/Marker

“I pick this because it reminds me about my family when we have fun and go on [an] adventure.”

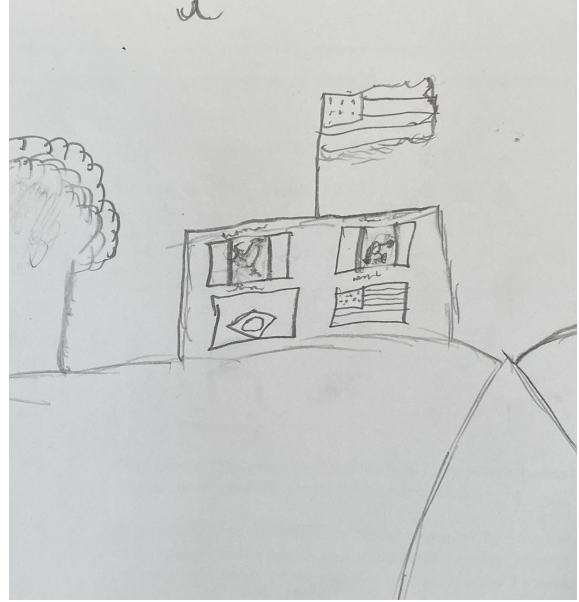
“I would put the bike [there] for people that are bikers and to see that bik[ing] is good and that they should be proud about biking.”

[Abstract Sculpture was third most popular among existing examples of art in park spaces]

Popular Themes and Ideas shared among students:

Interactive Artwork for Playing with/on

- Sport goal(s) or post for futbol/soccer
- Playground Element
- Structures on which to play games (e.g., tic tac toe)



Multicultural Imagery with Flags and Banners:

- Specifically flags of the Americas including the United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Brazil, etc

Work that incorporates painting, figurative, and abstract sculpture

Art with Messages:

- Signage with Welcome Language for Park Community Visitors
- “Don’t Give Up”
- “Be Kind”
- “Be Yourself”

Further Ideas:

- Animal Sculptures in the Water
- Artistic Bridge over the Water system
- Trees: “Something just [to help] see the trees moving like somebody will be there. In this I remember my family and always I will remember.”
- Faith: “bautista”

VISION BOARD POP-UPS



The Vision Board worked as a collective thought process for the people living and working in Oak Grove and the multiple communities within a 10-mile radius of the future park. Between May and August 2021, through limited pop-ups at the sites mentioned below, porch-side chats, phone and video calls, the Creative Strategist presented participants a visual aid of the site, the future park plan, and examples of existing public art in a format similar to that of the East Side workshops. Participants were asked to identify future spaces from the design that they thought were the best for future public art, what kind or form of art they preferred, and what subject matter should be the focus of the art work. Presenting as an Artist to convey the vision of participants in real time, the Strategist translated ideas as sketches on the vision board along with notes. To minimize physical contact throughout the engagements for public safety, the Creative Strategist documented participants' responses on the board, while also working with educators and collaborators for translation as necessary.

Sites of Engagement:

- Lynnbrook Ave.
- The Spot, 1800 E. Main Street
- Supermercado el sol, Grocery, 1906 S Highland Park Ave.

- Stove Works, Art Space, 1250 E 13th Street
- Hawthorne Street

Participant Details:

- 40 to 50 Persons
- Proximity to Lynnbrook:
 - Residents
 - Teachers
 - Work with local organizations
 - Business-owners
- Cultural Background
 - 40% identify as Black
 - 40% identify as Latin American
 - 15% identify as White
 - 5% identify as Other

The data from participants' input is organized below in categories of **spaces**, **medium**, and **subject**, listing the specific opportunities and ideas in descending order according to their popularity. The specific quotes provided represent ideas and themes that were most prominently repeated throughout engagement or that stood out as input.

Spaces:

1. Entry Plaza

“Art to inspire people as they come into the park.”

“Something to pull people in to go further into the park.”

2. Playground Area

“Something for children to interact with.”

“Characters.”

3. Stream

“A sculpture that [interacts] with the water.”

“Art on the bridges over the water.”

4. Adult Gaming Area

“Maybe an abstract checkerboard or game sculpture where adults play games.”

Other:

Potential Art on Bridges

Form

1. Figurative Sculpture

“Something to inspire children in the playground, like a lego sculpture.”

“When you have something you can take a photograph with, it's more dynamic for people to engage with and it's a snapshot of time...”

2. Abstract Sculpture

“Natural (responding to the land or themes of nature).”

3. Mural

“Pictures of the people living here now.”

“A way to remember people.”

Subject Matter:

1. Cultural Identity

“Role models and indigenous people.”

“Strong representation of Hispanic culture.”

“Care for family.”

“Something about the local businesses of color (e.g., grocery, hair salons, style, etc)”

2. Shared Culture

“Community unity between Brown and Black people”

“Cultural traditions that Black and Brown people share.”

Food.

3. Remember Who Was Here and Who Is Here

“Something that speaks to the people living here now...and asks the question to new residents, “why are you here? There’s been so much displacement.”

“How does a piece say, ‘I was here.’”

“Something to document the lives of the community in a respectful way.”

4. Honoring the Land

“When thinking about the water in the area...[artwork] that is about our relationship to land, water, natural resources.”

“What would the land have to say about all of this as a [park]?”

“Something representing the Guatemalan landscape...mountains.”

INTERVIEWS

Throughout engagement with the communities near Lynnbrook, multiple conversations emerged regarding identity, history, and their impact on the future park space and the visual expressions of the park. When circling back with residents (long term and new), the Creative Strategist engagement centered a few residents to interview about their experiences and aspirations for their respective neighborhoods and how such could be expressed in public art in Lynnbrook Park. Participants who granted permission for use of their input included a resident and youth worker who has lived in Oak Grove for 3 decades, a resident who works as a community organizer and educator throughout East Chattanooga, and a couple raising their infant child across the street from the park site. Their thoughts and ideas regarding the purpose and potential of public art are excerpted below and organized in the following themes: *Cultural Plurality and Shared Traditions*, *Notions and Nuance of Community and Gardens*, and *Relatability to the Artist and their Artwork*.

Cultural Plurality and Shared Traditions

Participant 4: “It definitely needs to be inclusive. There so many backgrounds and different types of people, including a queer community. The [area] has a rich history.”

Participant 4: “[Be] mindful not only of the Latinx [population], but the specific Latin American communities present in the neighborhood. We have Mexican neighbors, Black neighbors, and Guatemalan neighbors. ...Incorporate Mexican and/or Guatemalan art or artist(s).”

Participant 4, Re: Gatherings in the Latinx community: “I feel like in the Black community [the equivalent] is a family reunion.”

Participant 4, Re: Utility of Art Structure: “Vegetation or [structure] for shade. ...We literally have a random soccer ball in our backyard [from kids playing] (laughs), maybe some permanent cones or goals.”

Participant 1: “Use images and symbols that represent the elders and people that we looked up to while growing up.”

Notions and Nuance of *Community and Gardens*

Participant 3: “There are a lot of families in this area. Maybe the artwork [sic] encourages people to gather in the space (in terms of family, community).”

Participant 3: “Artwork that is a community garden maybe. I feel like that’s something that could bring the communities together...my grandma had a garden...I feel like that’s something that can coordinate with Black, Brown, and other communities...that’s a version of art too.”

Participant 4, Re: History of area and gardening in local spaces: “Back in the day, especially if you went down Hawthorne, everyone grew corn in their yard...it used to be a very Black and Brown community.”

Participant 4: “The community is very tied to local restaurants and businesses.”

Participant 1: “Focus on safety and hope for young people.”

Relatability to the Artist and the Artwork

Participant 2: “The work should center trust and respect for the community.” “History.”

Participant 3: “Art...it's not attainable for a lot of people; like going to museum, etc...When the art starts, I think an introduction, just something in the mailbox: ‘Hey I’m _____ I’m going to be doing _____ feel free to pop by and introduce...’ Something that doesn’t make people feel

further away from art ('they're doing this mural over here or whatever, it's not for me')...something that makes people feel like art is for everybody.”

Participant 4: “If you want to stick with one artist, you still need to get feedback from people within the realms of the races that person is [going] to represent [in the work].”

Other Ideas Mentioned:

- Interactive community resources: libraries, food pantries, etc
- Animals and wildlife subjects as related to the natural surrounding
- Garden Art Reference: [Rashid Johnson, *Antoine's Organ*, 2016](#)

OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS & FRAMEWORK

When considering the Opportunity Analysis and Framework for the public art of Lynnbrook Park, it is critical to note the context and park design plans available to residents and participants throughout the period of engagement. While participants and the creative strategist were familiar with the aforementioned park design materials and potential future amenities based on the engineering firm's community preview material, they did not have confirmation on the status of donated amenities or any updated park design choices that occurred after engagement in late summer or Fall 2021. While avoiding direct invitations or events on the space to reduce the risk of Covid-19 exposure during engagement, the creative process relied on people's existing familiarity with the site from previous engagement and their creative ideas of public art potential based on the definitive dynamics of the park design and the main elements. In post-engagement consultation with PAC, it is apparent that a purposeful artwork that meaningfully responds to the community should include a centralized work within the Art Plaza, with additional artistic elements in other tangential spaces throughout the park space.

Based on the findings in engagement, this report recommends prioritizing key opportunities for public art in Lynnbrook Park's spaces that are optimal for gathering: including the Entry Plaza, Playground Area, Art Plaza, Gaming Area, the Open Lawn, and/or areas adjacent to the Creek Section (including but not limited to potential 2D artwork on the future Foot Bridges).

This report further recommends an intentional approach to the public art element of Lynnbrook Park that uses imagery, color, and sculptural elements that can be implemented in various parts and spaces of the park to express a common theme and message. As an example, rather than investing all resources into a single piece to be installed at the Art Plaza, the public art could include separate elements that introduce visitors to a theme through a smaller marker or piece at the entry which continues with a corresponding piece and subject matter in the other plaza(s) or park space. Residents also expressed interest in how the content and style of the public art might

further influence the potential future amenities. For example, the future bridge crossings or pavilion could be painted with colors, symbols, and styles that correlate and/or compliment the initial public art work.



Interactive Play Examples from Storyland, New Orleans, LA - Courtesy of Associated Press

Additional Opportunities for Public Art and Artist to Consider:

- “Centerpiece” in Art Plaza with other elements throughout park
 - Residents echoed the idea of a piece with a theme that would permeate the park
 - Calling for a work or series that culminates in the Art Plaza could achieve multiple aspirations for the public art while inviting participants to engage with it in various ways and locations
- Artistic Theme in Entry and Playground that culminates at Art Plaza
 - Requires coordinating playground elements that are already determined by donated material. Design would have to take this into consideration.
- Welcoming Art Work at Entry Plaza
 - Possible ground mural or designs on amenities, but this may be difficult to maintain long-term. A small marker or sculpture could be effective and manageable.
- Interactive Sculptural Piece in Playground Space or Gathering Area
 - The design and aesthetics of the donated playground materials and amenities could limit the artistic design of works that would only exist in this space. Committing a smaller element of a larger piece to this area may be better for the work as a whole.

- Artistic Rendering of a Garden alongside Creek/Water System
 - While the theme of a garden was popular in both the literal and sculptural sense, it may not be the best single focus for the art given the other potential dynamic ideas.
- Artwork Activation on Future Amenities that continues theme of initial Art on Plaza, etc
 - Color and style theme on potential Playground that reflects Public Art Piece
 - Color theme or text on Bridges
- Vibrant colors representing Latinx Cultures and Black Cultural Traditions
- Sculpture that can be used for sports in open lawn area (goals for soccer, etc)

VISION STATEMENT

Lynnbrook Avenue's intersection with Main Street places its park, the Oak Grove community, and nearby neighborhoods at a point of dynamic diversity and dramatic change. Many of these neighborhoods are historically abundant with Black and Latinx communities. However, recent, current, and future development and the threat of displacement remain a concern and source of anxiety for residents, even as they've shared their time and energy to inform and inspire this park (and now its public art) over the past few years. The experiences, ideas, and aspirations shared by the Lynnbrook community inspire a public artwork that honors the people and land as they exist now, to ensure they are identified and respected by all who visit the park and engage the art in the future.

Public Art Reflecting the Vibrancy and Stories of its People

Residents and people devoted to the community are largely mindful of the diverse cultures and the need for artistic vision that speaks to the multitude of identities that abound within the park's neighborhoods. It is not enough to just speak to Latin America culture through one country's identity, but to communicate a message that speaks to the various backgrounds and identities within the Latin American context. Several residents identified the longstanding presence of Black residents in the community, who have seen the promise of a park space come and go in years past. As they see the exciting developments, but within the larger shadow of developments that don't prioritize them, they ask what roles might a park and public art play in representing them? To identify and speak to the Black and Latinx communities, residents are interested in an artistic vision that can show the bridges between these communities and what they share along with this space.

Interaction with the Space and People

Since the beginning of engagement for Lynnbrook Park in summer 2018, the theme of interacting with the site and the water system permeated our dialogue and process of imagining the space. That theme continues to challenge and inspire ideas for public art, as residents are well aware of the stormwater dynamics in the area and want to prioritize safety in every aspect of gathering, engagement, and play in the space. A public art work, like the park, should work *with* the water dynamic and not against it, and invite the public to do the same as they engage with the space.

Project Communication and Responsiveness with Community

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and amplified many of the issues we face in providing care and engagement with communities. In light of these lessons, the communities of Lynnbrook Park deserve and ask for dynamic public art that reflects their identities and that can inspire relationships and responsiveness among residents, between the community and the artist, and between the community and the City of Chattanooga.

HOW TO CONTINUE ENGAGEMENT GOING FORWARD.

- **Multilingual Signage and Mailers**
 - Many residents still regularly engage print media and also find it accessible in their day-to-day interactions with local business and restaurants. Developing and sustaining relationships with these spaces and making information accessible in English and Spanish and in safe direct mailers will help provide the community the information they should have about the park's development and the progress of the public art element.
- **Engage Parents through Students at Local Schools**
 - Through safe and consistent engagement with students at local schools (including East Side, Orchard Knob, and Howard), it is easier to provide relevant information and updates to parents and to invite them to engage with the future park as the community remains very family driven as it pertains to engagements.
- **Consistent Communication and Respect Throughout Development and Artist's Process**
 - While navigating the pandemic, it remains critical to be as respectfully proximate as possible to community members when the artist and artwork is selected for the space. Ensuring that community members' time and energy is valued in the process of artist selection and installation. Creating ways to incentivize residents' participation and communication is critical.