

The Square on 21st was putting planning in action. We have long recognized through numerous community plans the lack of park space in the Ballpark and Arapahoe Square districts of Downtown. As the residential population of Downtown continues to rise, there is an ever-increasing demand on the little existing open space we have. This pop-up park asked the question, “What if we repurposed and rethought our shared public realm in a way that provides new quality outdoor green space growing downtown for our residents to play outdoors?” The Square on 21st temporarily converted a street into a park for two months this past summer to see what would happen.

The Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan, adopted in 2010, recommended revitalization of 21st Street to create a destination for the Arapahoe Square and Ballpark districts of Downtown Denver. Recognizing the lack of public parkland, it imaged new green space and community gather areas, and neighborhood park amenities in the street in order to create a vibrant livable neighborhood on the edge of the downtown core.

In 2015, the Downtown Denver Partnership partnered with the City of Denver and the Colorado Rockies to further identify the vision and urban design plan for 21st Street. This urban design plan set out a bold vision for what a street could be. Rather than invest millions of dollars building out this radical idea, it was decided to test the design concept and to quickly achieve maximum benefit for Downtown Denver with a demonstration project. The Square on 21st pop-up park tested the feasibility of ways to design 21st Street as an active public realm where the pedestrian is the priority and is conducive to frequent special events and game day festivities. Concepts tested included creative solutions such as new and expanded streetscapes, pedestrian seating areas, easily adaptable special event tents, bike corrals, street closures and other methods. This effort required strong partnerships and support between multiple City Departments, (Community Planning and Development, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works), Downtown Denver Partnership, and Ballpark neighborhood residents and stakeholders, and brought to light new ways to think about public space in our city.

What we saw was a community park born out of the street, a place where residents could take their dogs in morning and grab a coffee for themselves. I was there at about 7:30 one morning and witnessed some commuters walking to work that decided to play a quick game of ping pong on their way. The Square also filled a deep desire for quality outdoor event space. Events ranging from smaller cultural events such as Japan in the Square, and intimate neighborhood movies in the park, to major all day beer festivals, and large-scale silent discos that attracted well over a thousand dancers to this new public square.

The Square on 21st was open from June 15 to August 15, 2017 and provided a temporary gathering place for a neighborhood that doesn't currently have open or public spaces. Those who live and work here had an opportunity to enjoy amenities they usually had to leave the neighborhood to access. The square increased street-level activity and encouraged area residents, commuters and visitors alike to consider Denver's urban spaces in new ways.

The installation urged visitors to consider new and creative uses for publicly-owned streets and sidewalks. It is the direct result of plans created by the Downtown Denver Partnership and the City of Denver, specifically the 21st and Wynkoop Urban Design plan and The Outdoor Downtown both of which were co-funded and co-managed by the Partnership and the City

After a successful summer that saw more than 15,000 visitors come to the Square on 21st, a pop-up park between Larimer and Lawrence Streets, traffic returned to this downtown block, but the energy continued with the 5280 Loop planning process led by the Downtown Denver Partnership to take the idea of the Square on 21st and expand into a 5-mile route around Downtown Denver.. The park, a

collaboration between the City and County of Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership, showcased how underused public right-of-way can be activated and transformed, and it provided a park-like public space in a neighborhood that lacks these types of spaces.

Numerous data were collected over the two months the park was open, which we are now analyzing to better understand what worked and what didn't. This information is being rolled into the next phase of design for the 5280 Loop and detailed design of 21st Street. The overwhelming success of this project has led to a \$850,000 additional investment from the City to complete construction documents to permanently build a park in 21st Street.

The Square on 21st was produced, designed, and planned for collaboratively by the Downtown Denver Partnership and the City and County of Denver. The City provided the initial funding for the project through their Capital Improvements budget, and the Partnership managed all programming of the space. Project partners included the Ballpark Collective, the Colorado Rockies, Goodland Construction, Human Movement, PetSmart, Overcon Containers, 2Keys Corporation, University of Colorado-Denver, the So-Gnar Creative Division, and Kobra Paint.