



Realizing the Potential of THE PORCH

A CASE STUDY IN DATA-DRIVEN PLACEMAKING

SEPTEMBER 2013



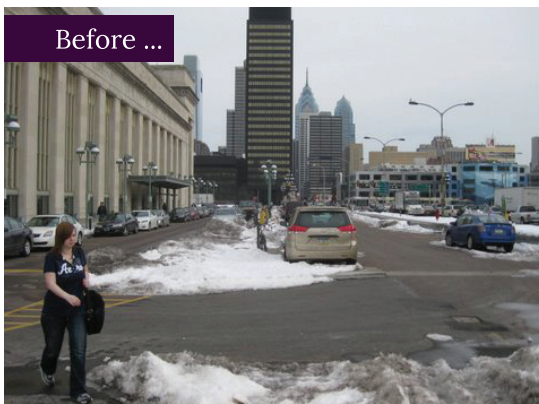
University City District WITH _INTERFACE STUDIO

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT



In November 2011, University City District unveiled The Porch at 30th Street Station. In doing so, UCD had seized upon an opportunity - a PennDOT project had created a 55' x 500' stretch of sidewalk where there had previously been 33 parallel parking spaces - and bet that there was adequate demand for a vibrant public space at the location.

Acting quickly, UCD humanized the space with a relatively modest and fully removable set of furnishings and then infused the space with an eclectic range of programs. The furnishings and events were accompanied by a rigorous study of site usage patterns, using a methodology inspired by urban sociologist William "Holly" Whyte, intended to inform a more capital-intensive, long-term vision. This report, *Realizing the Potential of The Porch*, summarizes the research findings and presents lessons learned from a season of data collection during six temperate months of 2012.



ONE YEAR OLD & ALREADY...

250
places to sit



20
gourmet food trucks



13,500
al fresco lunches



19 farmers' market days



637
commutes intercepted daily



1,008
yoga sun salutations

1,165,000
private dollars raised



1,600
rounds of miniature golf



1,553
first impressions of Philadelphia

1 praying mantis habitat



10,391
flowers planted



68
planters

2
art openings

75
planned musical performances

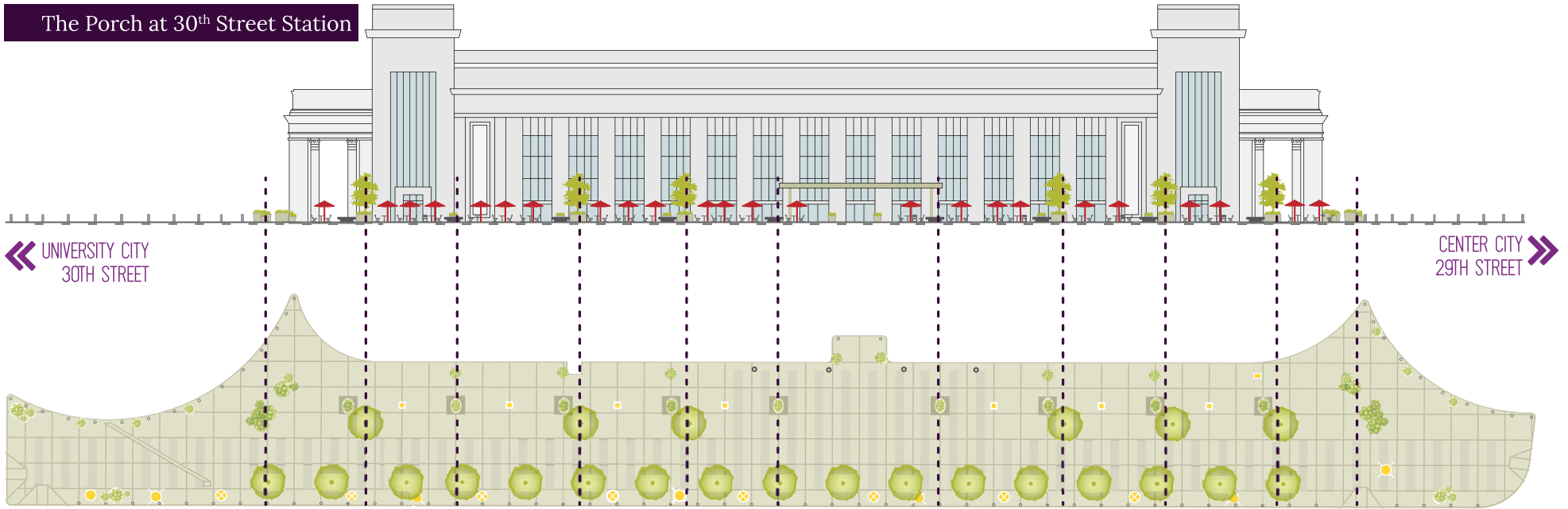


1,224
impromptu piano rhapsodies

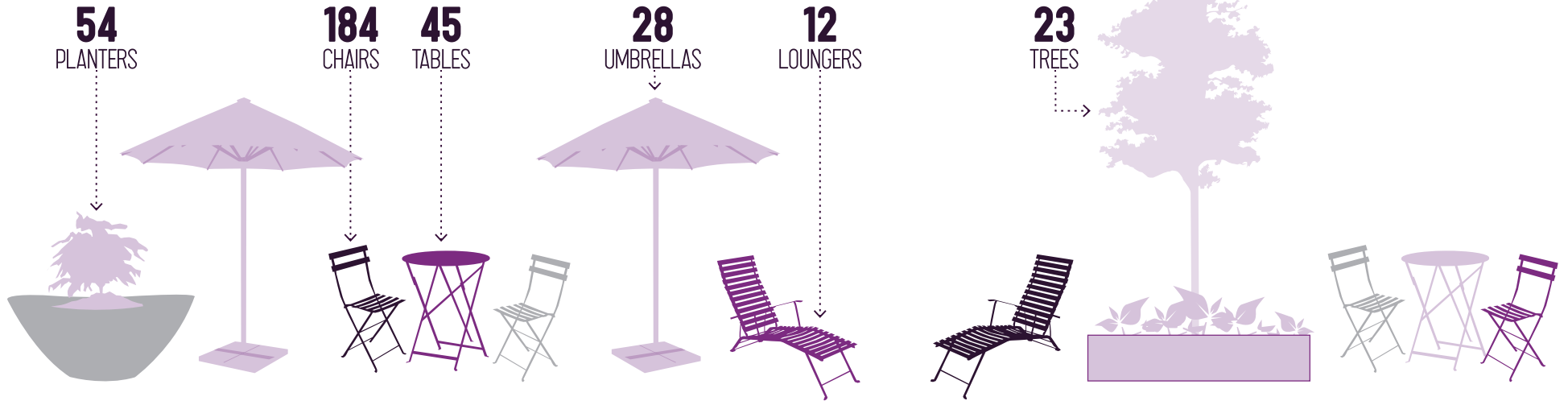
400
free at noon concertgoers

Before 2011, the area we now know as The Porch at 30th Street Station was a small parking lot. In its first year as The Porch, the space enjoyed many successes.

The Porch at 30th Street Station



Featuring a basic set of elements introduced by University City District in year one



UCD's short term goals for The Porch were to efficiently and economically create a place for the thousands of pedestrians who pass through the site to sit, read, stroll, socialize, or otherwise enjoy the magnificent views of the Schuylkill River, bridges, and the Center City skyline.

The process of developing The Porch was quick; UCD made the decision to layer on top of the PennDOT sidewalk in April, and The Porch opened seven months later immediately following the completion of the PennDOT construction project. The interventions were basic. The linear space was divided into a series of outdoor rooms, punctuated by trees and umbrellas. High quality seasonal plantings added color and texture, but because large planters were cost prohibitive, agricultural feeding troughs were repurposed with green roof technology to create large, economical planters with trees to filter traffic noise and foster a hospitable pedestrian environment.

UCD deployed movable tables and chairs to allow users maximum flexibility in choosing where to sit in relation to the space, other people, and the sun. In addition, UCD made a sizable investment in programming the site - farmers' markets, yoga classes, musical performances and concerts of different scales, food truck rallies, and a beer garden, to name a few - to bring users to the site. This approach provided an opportunity to beta test The Porch as a public space, experimenting with a variety of configurations and programming to determine what would draw people to the space before making permanent capital changes.



Performance Space photo by Conrad Erb

The Porch is many things to many people

IDENTIFY NEED



EVALUATE USE



EXPERIMENT WITH TEMPORARY IMPROVEMENTS



*iterative
placemaking*

The approach to placemaking at The Porch has informed a broader data-driven placemaking strategy at UCD, dubbed “iterative placemaking.” Given a vast unmet need for pedestrian amenities and a fiscal climate that restricts public funding for large capital-intensive public space projects, UCD has worked to:

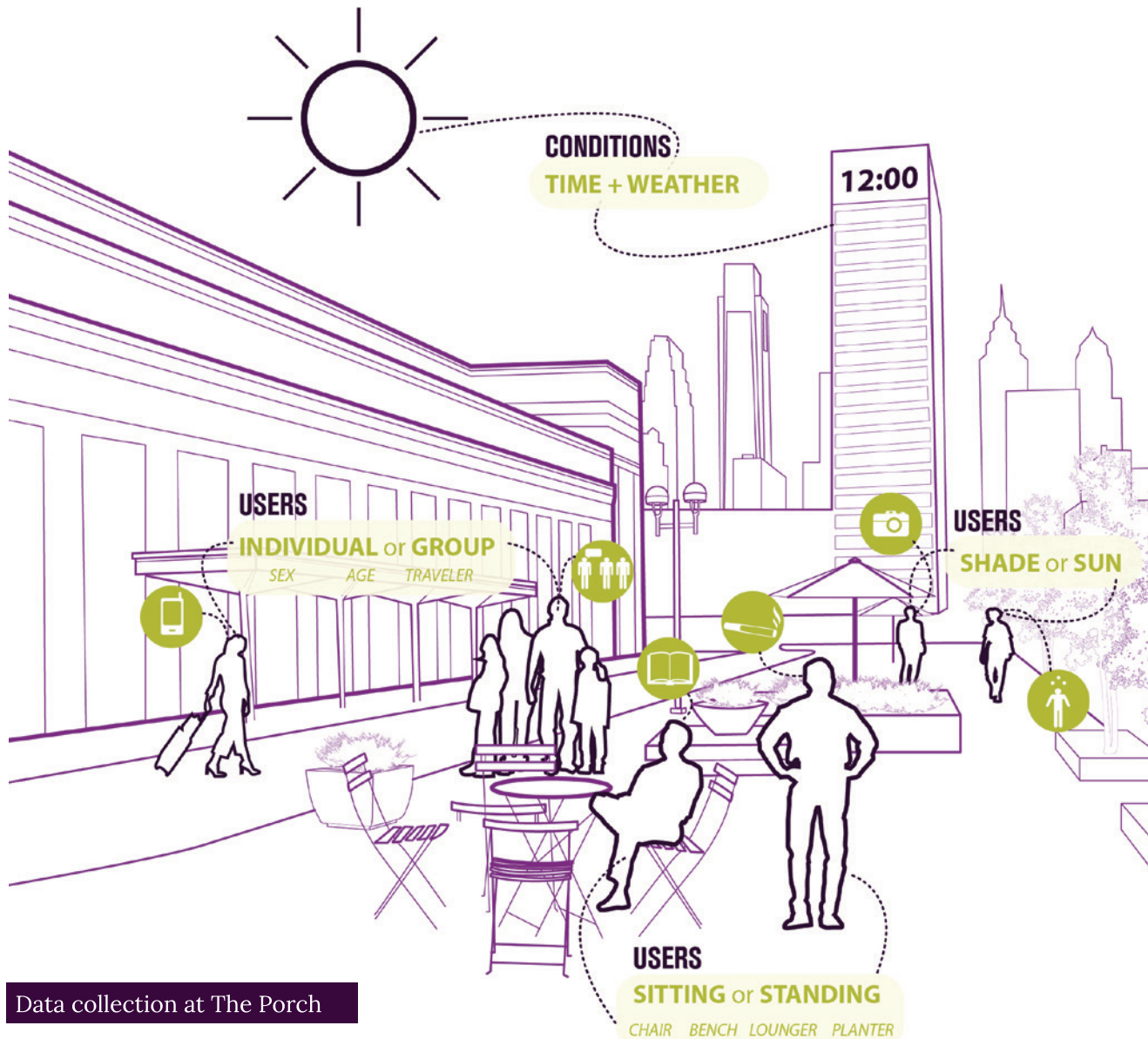
- 1 **IDENTIFY** needs by analyzing demand
- 2 **EXPERIMENT** with economical and/or temporary improvements
- 3 **EVALUATE** use
- 4 **ITERATE**, making additions and modifications as necessary

In devising this approach, UCD has been inspired by examples of new public spaces in other cities that have been developed by taking small, iterative, and experimental steps, called Lighter Quicker Cheaper by the Project for Public Spaces, and has gained a great deal of experience managing and stewarding multiple public spaces. This strategy has been used with UCD’s parklet program and with its pedestrian plaza projects, both partnerships with the Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities. It has also been used to make small changes at The Porch. During the course of the 2012 season, UCD added lounge chairs, additional planters, and temporary art installations; the effects of these small modifications on user behavior were closely monitored.

Usage patterns at The Porch suggest that it is worthy of ultimately joining Philadelphia's growing list of great public spaces, which includes Rittenhouse Square, Sister Cities Park, and the Race Street Pier. The Porch will evolve into an iconic, inviting, animated public place, a vibrant, engaging magnet, and a source of civic pride.

The pages that follow and the data analysis, observations, and design principles they contain will inform the long-term redesign of The Porch as well as short-term decisions related to programming, maintenance, and stewardship of the space. UCD also hopes that its work will inspire others to adopt its iterative placemaking approach.





Data collection at The Porch

CONDITIONS

TIME OF DAY
WEATHER TEMP - SUN - SHADE

USERS

GROUP
INDIVIDUAL - SEX - AGE - TRAVELER (luggage)
STANDING - SITTING - CHAIR - BENCH - LOUNGER - PLANTER
SUN - SHADE

ACTIVITY

- EATING / DRINKING
- CHATTING
- READING / WRITING
- SMOKING
- USING CELL PHONE / ELECTRONICS
- TAKING PICTURES
- SURVEYING / CANVASSING / FLYERING
- PANHANDLING
- PLAYING
- READING INFO SIGN
- PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITY
- SHOPPING AT VENDOR
- WORKING PERFORMER - VENDOR - POLICE - UCD
- HANGING OUT

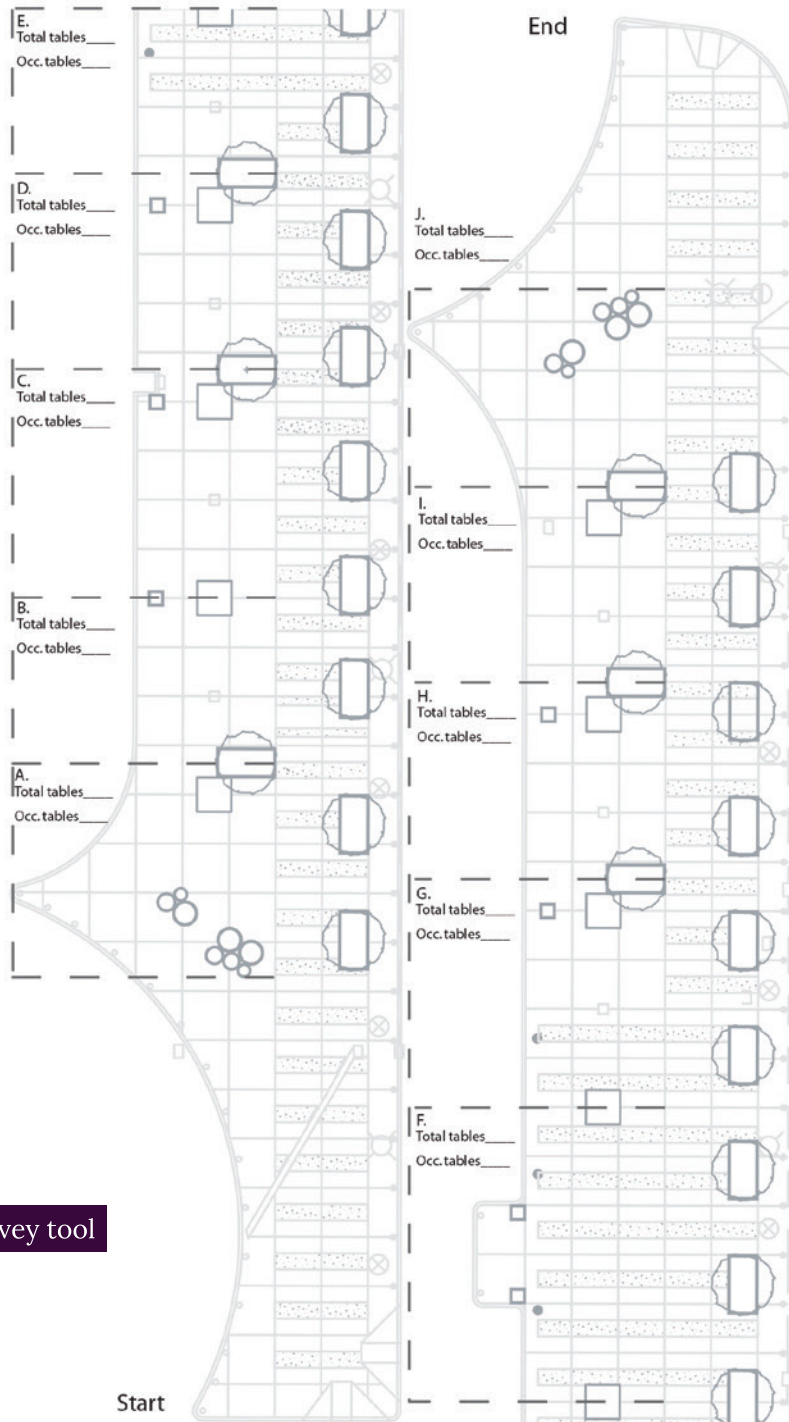
METHODS

Windswept plazas, poorly utilized parks, and vacant public squares. These spaces often suffer from a shared assumption - that the designer understands the user better than the user understands herself. At The Porch at 30th Street Station, UCD is taking the opposite approach, by creating a public space that responds to the user, and evolves to fit her needs.

In the spring and summer of 2012, UCD collected extensive data on the use of The Porch in order to understand user behavior at a micro and macro scale. The end result is one of the most rigorously observed and analyzed public spaces in Philadelphia, or anywhere else, and the data collected has the potential to inform The Porch's ongoing transformation into one of the first truly user-designed public spaces in the country. The following is a brief description of the data sources and collection methodology, with a more complete account available upon request.

Using the survey tool featured at right, data collection included an ongoing census of Porch users throughout the spring and summer of 2012, as well as more targeted, short term observations during the same period. The user census captured the age, gender, location, and activity (eating, talking, etc.) of Porch users, hourly, between 8:00AM and 6:00PM, from April 2nd to October 1st, 2012; in total, the observations document 24,698 total users.

Survey tool



Data Sheet # _____ Date: ____/____/____ Day: _____ Observer: _____ Start time: _____
 Approximate temperature: _____ Sun shining on entire Porch at start of count: Yes | No
 Weather: Clear | Partly cloudy | Mostly cloudy | Overcast | Light rain | Heavy rain | Light snow | Heavy snow

ID	Sex	Age	L	Position	Seat Location	Sun/Shad	Activities																														
Group#	User#	Male	Female	0-6	7-17	18-34	35-50	51-65	65+	Luggage?	Standing	Sitting	Chair	Bench	Lounge r	Planter	Sun	Shade	Eating and/or drinking	Talking to other people	Reading or Writing	Smoking	Using cell phone or other electronics	Non-specific behavior	Taking pictures	Shopping from vendor	Canvassing, surveys, etc	Distributing advertising flyers or newspapers	Police on foot	UCD employee	Performer, vendor, or provider of other programmed activity	Reading informational sign	Active participation in programmed activity	Panhandling	Playing	Other	
01																																					
02																																					
03																																					
04																																					
05																																					
06																																					
07																																					
08																																					
09																																					
10																																					
11																																					
12																																					
13																																					
14																																					
15																																					
16																																					
17																																					
18																																					
19																																					
20																																					
21																																					
22																																					
23																																					
24																																					
25																																					

Seated at chairs inside Station:(East end) _____ (West end) _____ (Total) _____ End time: _____
 Notes: _____



UCD staff at The Porch noted whether the user was sitting or standing, in the sun or in the shade, and the type of seat selected. The location and associated data for each user were imported into a GIS (Geographic Information System) and analyzed to answer questions like: “Do Porch users segregate by gender?” (no); and “Do Porch users segregate by activity?” (yes, depending on the use).

Among the shorter term, targeted observations, 33,953 pedestrians were counted over three days at key locations around The Porch, and for comparative purposes, on adjacent parallel streets. These observations revealed a bulge in the flow of pedestrians to The Porch at lunchtime, in addition to the expected “tidal” flows to and from it during rush hours. At a much finer level, observers also recorded how those pedestrians circulated through the space, tracking 1,275 individuals as they entered, stopped at, and left The Porch, yielding a visual representation of the permeability of the space, along with a quantifiable map of user origins and destinations.

As programming expanded at The Porch, including the availability of lunch from gourmet food trucks, observers tracked 290 lunchtime users to determine, among other things, where their food came from (the food trucks, when available), and how long they spent at The Porch (22 minutes, on average), while almost never littering (0.5% of lunch eaters). Finally, the best way to understand who uses a space, and why, is often to ask the user herself. Toward that end, UCD intercepted and surveyed 388 Porch users to learn where

they came from (51% from work, on a weekday), how they got there (94% by public transit, bicycle, or foot), what they liked best about the space (movable tables and chairs), and what they would like to see improved (better Wi-Fi service).

To provide a context for use at The Porch, UCD staff recorded wind and sound levels across the space, and also collected data on use at four comparable downtown public spaces across Philadelphia, including Rittenhouse Square, Sister Cities Park, and the Race Street Pier. Among the results of those observations was the finding that at peak times, The Porch attracts roughly three times as many users per acre as does Rittenhouse Square, and 15 times as many as the Race Street Pier.

Subsequent pages summarize and illustrate the key findings gleaned from the various survey methods and derive design principles from the observed patterns of user behavior and interaction with the space.

The Porch has clearly achieved a remarkable degree of success in its first year, but we believe that the 15 design principles that follow will further enhance its appeal and function as a physical place in the world, a gateway to Philadelphia, a civic space for the City, and a social space in people’s lives. We hope that the methods and analyses described here, and the lessons drawn from them, will serve as an inspiration for others seeking to create the next generation of great public spaces.

OBSERVATIONS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

The following pages illustrate and describe key observations from six months of data collection at The Porch. A design principle derived from the data analysis follows each observation, each intended to inspire and guide design decisions for more permanent capital investments at The Porch at 30th Street Station.

Four themes organize the key observations and their accompanying design principles:

- I PORCH USERS**
how people move through and use The Porch
- II THE SITE**
how environmental conditions inform the way people inhabit The Porch
- III THE POWER OF PROGRAMMING**
how events and activities broaden the user-base
- IV THE PORCH IN CONTEXT**
how The Porch can better serve and connect with its surrounding urban fabric



Porch Users

GENERAL MOVEMENT & USAGE PATTERNS



1 AS A PEDESTRIAN THROUGHWAY, THE PORCH MUST REMAIN OPEN, BUT INVITING

The daily ebb and flow of people at The Porch dramatically changes both the character of the plaza and the demands placed on the space at different times of day. During rush hours, the east and west ends function as pedestrian thoroughways, funneling almost 75% of pedestrians directly into or out of 30th Street Station, such that they do not experience the interior space of The Porch. During peak hours, these edges experience far greater foot traffic than Chestnut and Walnut Streets to the south.

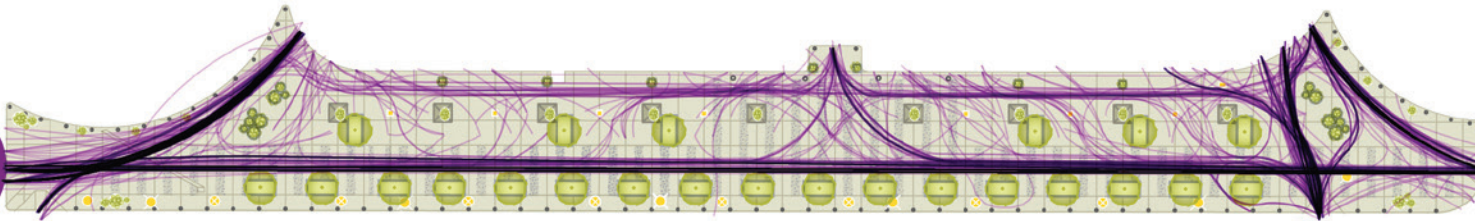
The design of The Porch must accommodate the heavily traveled paths of pedestrian traffic during rush hours, while also striving to entice passersby, converting commuters into guests who make time to pause and enjoy the new public space and range of amenities available to all.

Pedestrian flow to and through The Porch

DEPARTING STATION
ENTERING STATION
WALKING END TO END
STOPPING AT PORCH



PEOPLE EXITING FROM
AMTRAK'S SOUTH WAITING ROOM
are MOST LIKELY to
STOP AT THE PORCH

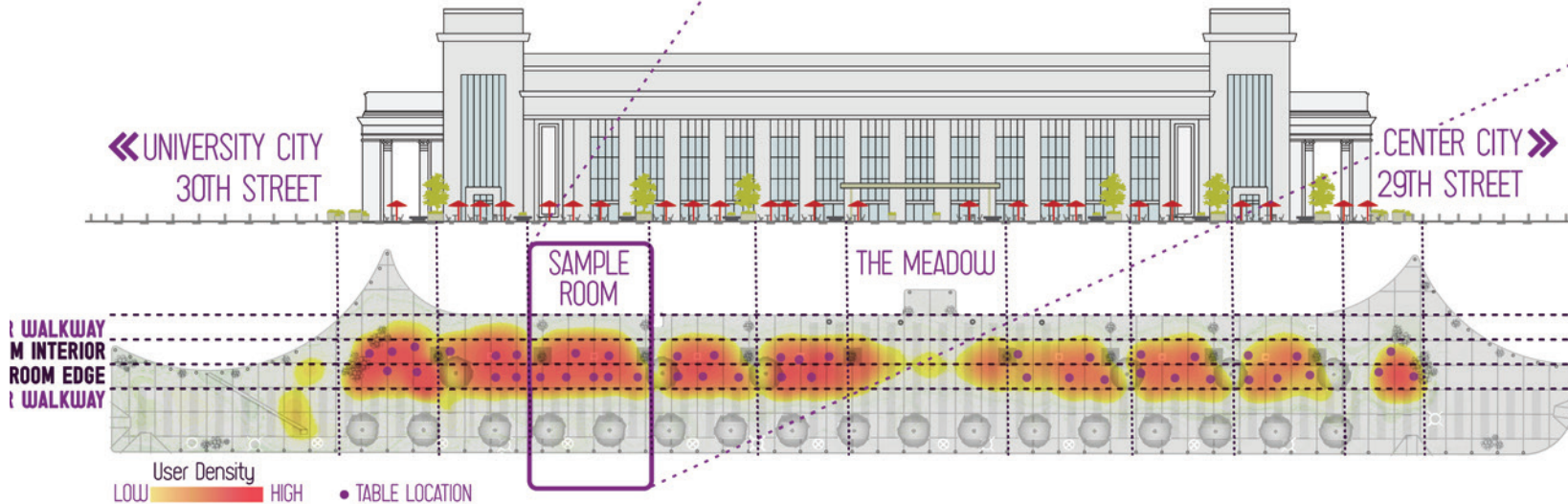
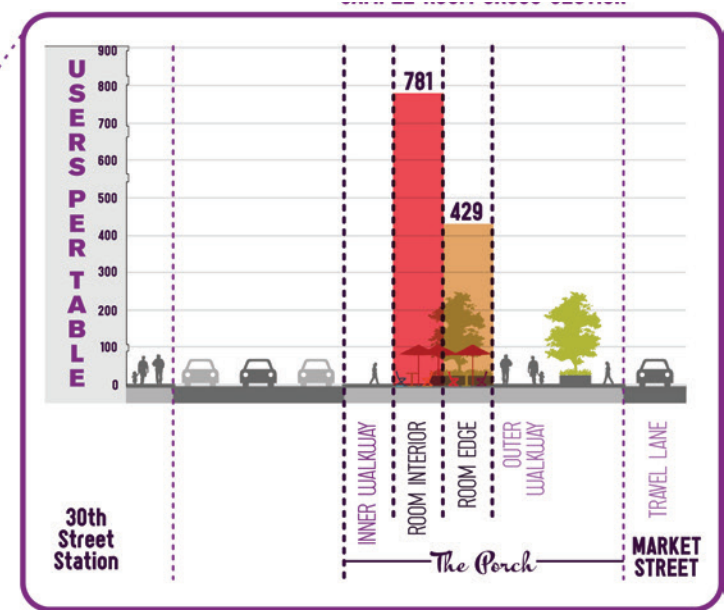


PEDESTRIAN ROUTES TRACKED
TO & THROUGH THE PORCH

2 AS A PUBLIC PLAZA, THE PORCH MUST OPERATE AT TWO SPEEDS, CONDUCTIVE TO MOVEMENT BUT ALSO TO REST

The majority of Porch users who choose to linger rather than pass through approach The Porch from within the train station and favor the west end in their choice of seat. Those seeking tables within The Porch’s “rooms” east and west of The Meadow, consistently select tables located toward room interiors, set away from the heavily-trafficked pedestrian walkways.

The design of The Porch must differentiate between its commuter corridors and its internal spaces, buffering the heart of the plaza from the bustle at the edges and creating flexible areas that offer a sense of enclosure for those seeking quiet and relaxation, conversation, a picnic table, or a makeshift conference room *en plein air*.

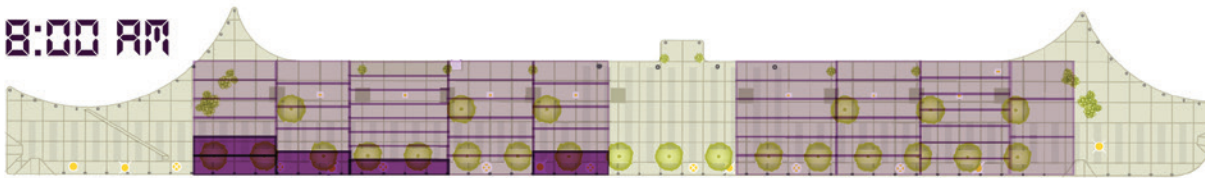


Users prefer the interior of The Porch’s “rooms”

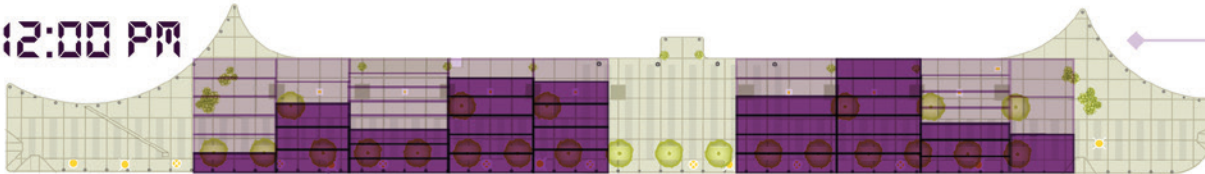
Table occupancy by room on a typical Friday, sunny and warm, when the number of available tables limits total capacity (since strangers generally don't share tables)



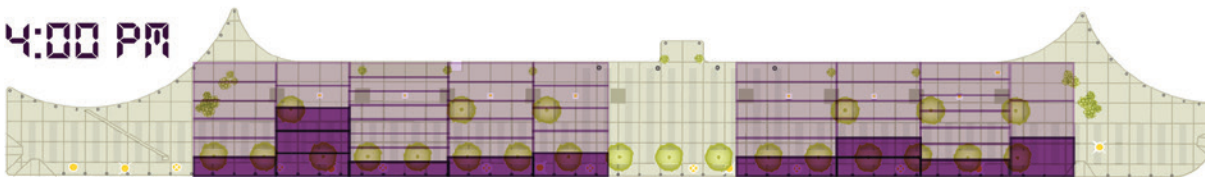
8:00 AM



12:00 PM



4:00 PM



A quiet morning at The Porch



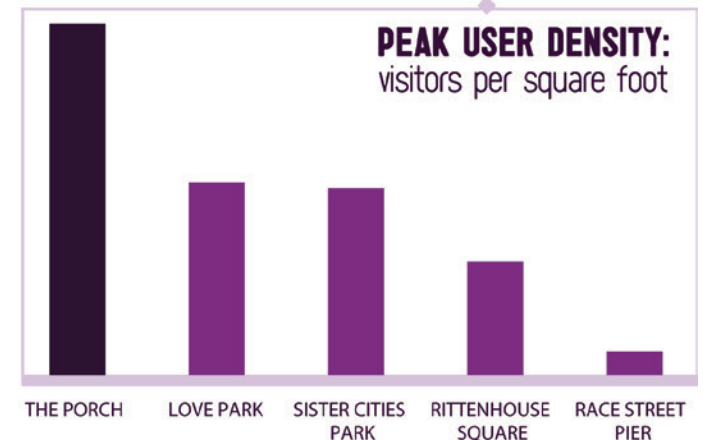
Lunch hour rush

3 WITH BIG SWELLS IN POPULATION, THE PORCH MUST SEAT MANY, WITHOUT APPEARING EMPTY DURING LULLS

If through-traffic defines a typical rush hour at The Porch, lunch hour more-closely resembles musical chairs. When the weather is warm and sunny, The Porch approaches capacity and buzzes with activity, with people coming to sit and eat, meet friends, make a call, or enjoy the fresh air, all while taking full advantage of available seats and tables.

Indeed, peak user density (measured in visitors per square foot) at The Porch is almost twice as high as at Love Park or Sister Cities Park, and three times as high as at Rittenhouse Square.

The design of The Porch must play host to daily population swells without appearing deserted during off-hours.

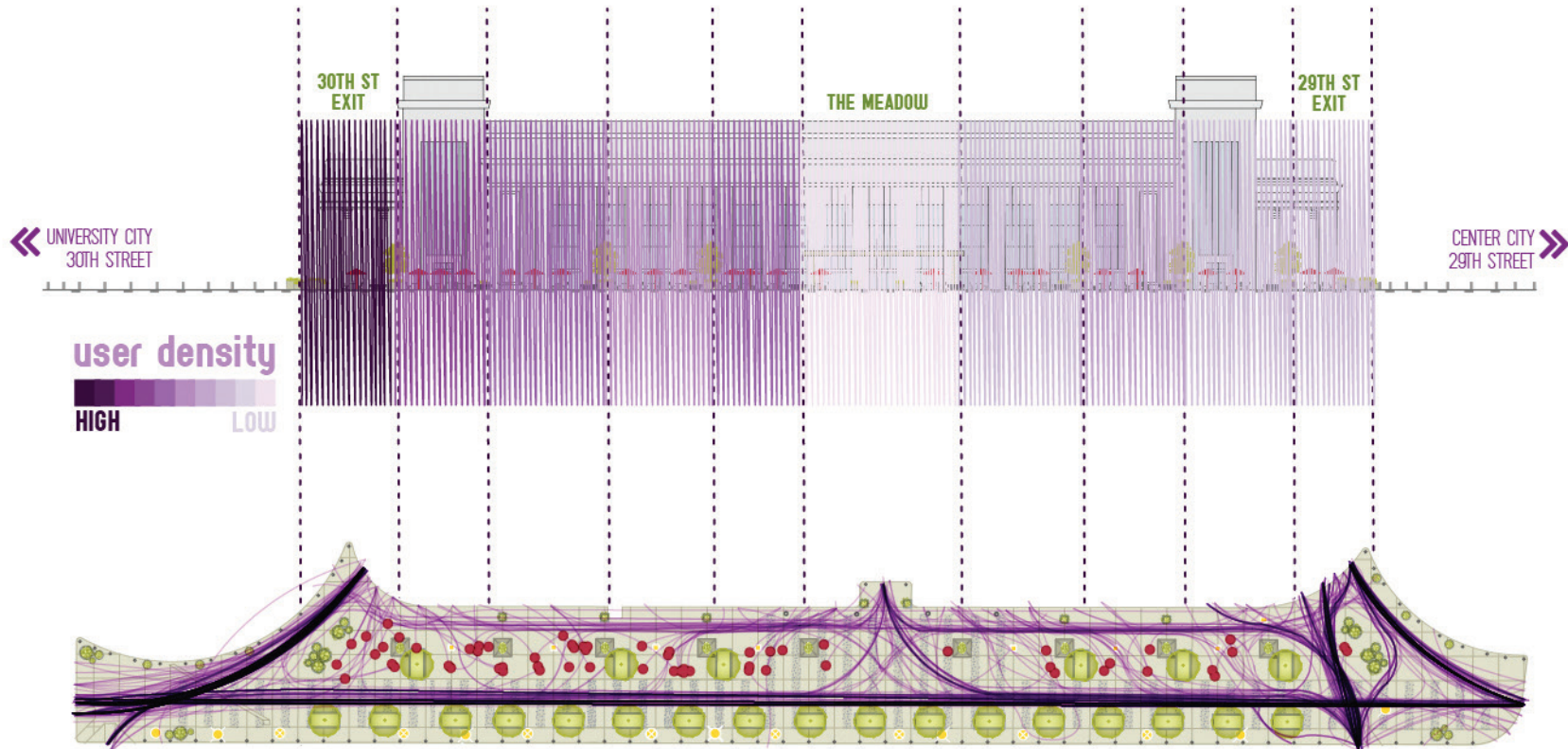


4 WITH REGARD TO INTERIOR DESIGN OF ITS ROOMS, THE PORCH MUST CHOOSE: EMBRACE THE WESTERN-BIAS OF PORCH USERS OR ATTEMPT TO DRAW VISITORS TO THE CURRENTLY UNDERUSED PORTIONS OF THE SPACE

Overall, visitors favored the west side. Closer study of the pedestrian paths tracked to and through the space reveals that people entering rooms on the western half of The Porch tend to stop and inhabit the space, while those entering rooms east of The Meadow tend to traverse the rooms, continuing on their way to or from the Station.

Is the through-traffic flowing through the eastern rooms born of necessity given The Porch's location at the nexus of Center City and West Philadelphia, a transit hub and major employers? Or can such traffic be redirected, establishing calmer conditions east of The Meadow, conditions more conducive to those who wish to sit and stay a while?

The design of The Porch must acknowledge existing patterns of use, and decide whether to reconfigure rooms east of The Meadow as destinations, not walkways, or embrace the western-bias of Porch users and design the east end to afford fluid movement between Center City and the transit-hub at 30th Street Station.



STOPPING POINTS

PEDESTRIAN ROUTES TRACKED TO & THROUGH THE PORCH

Users are more likely to occupy the “rooms” on the west side of The Porch; those on the east side are more likely to be passed through.

5 BEYOND COMFORT AND CHOICE, FURNISHINGS AT THE PORCH SHOULD OFFER VARIETY AND ENCOURAGE SPONTANEITY AND PLAY



First round of amenities deployed

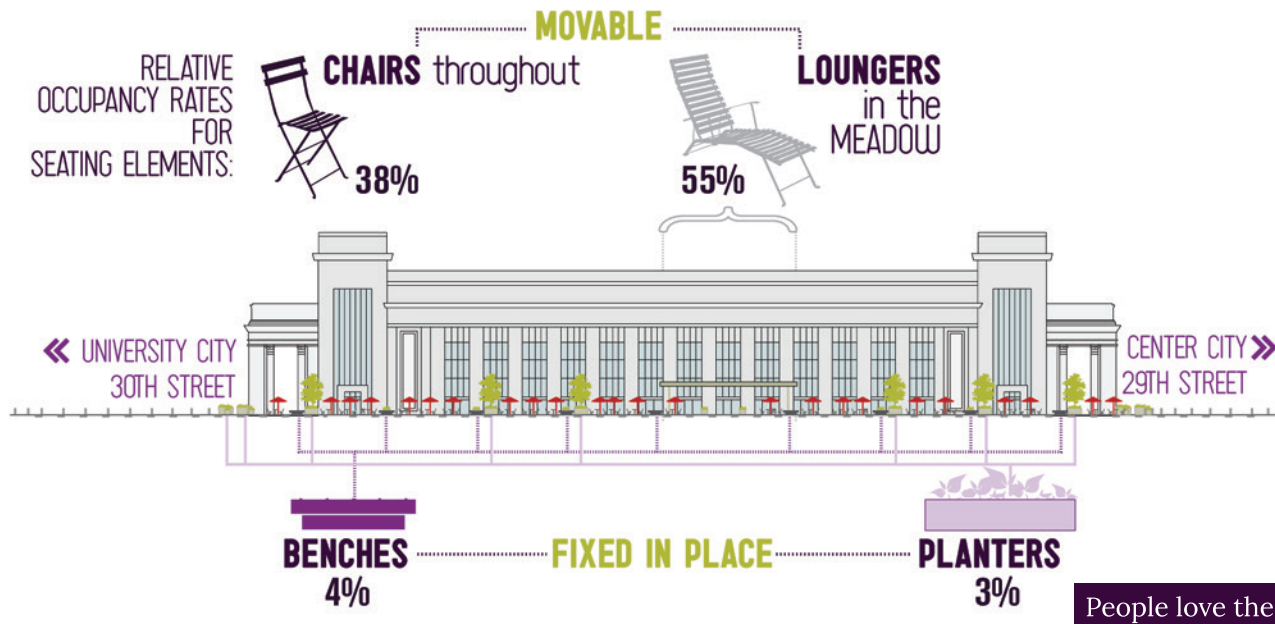


Second round

The Porch fills a great need for public space at the nexus of a major transportation hub, employment centers, and institutions of higher learning, right at the front door to Center City. As such, The Porch enjoys a natural user base – Porch users who have been frequenting the space since it was transformed from parking lot to plaza. As a public space, The Porch invites people to pass through or to visit, and to merit a prolonged visit, The Porch must be a good host.

Observations indicate that people love the movable furniture, favoring the loungers and movable chairs far above the benches and planters fixed in place; survey results echoed the observations, with Porch users most appreciative of the new tables and chairs.

The design of The Porch must provide a range of basic amenities – tables and chairs, particularly movable elements in a mix of styles, offering variety and choice and subject to the whims of their users who might prefer to face the sun or seek shade, sit alone or in groups, and above all seek adaptable pieces that allow them to customize their experience.

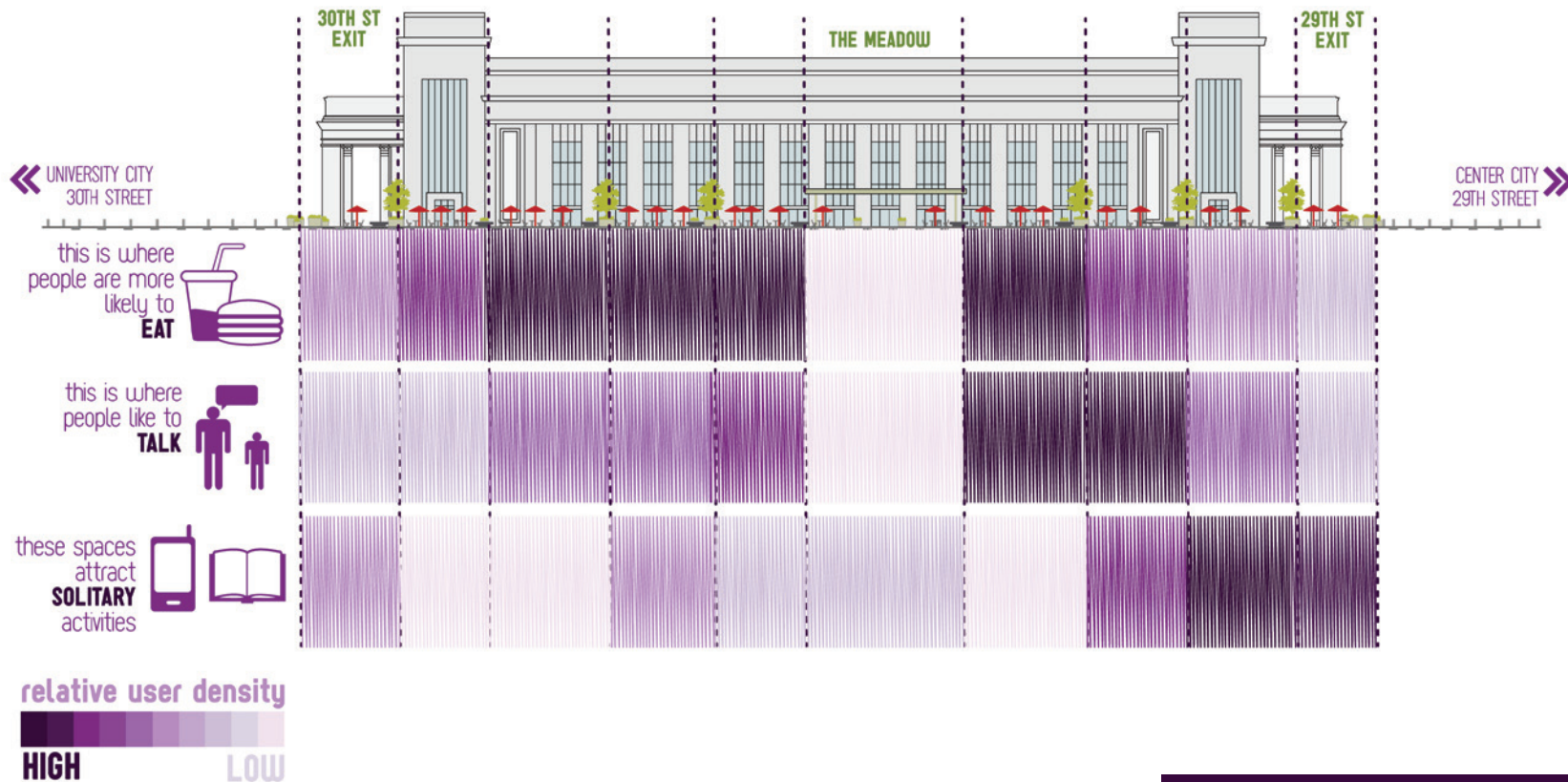


People love the loungers

6 AS A SOCIAL SPACE, BUT ALSO A PLACE OF PEACE AND SOLITUDE, THE PORCH MUST FOSTER CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT THE DIVERSITY OF ACTIVITIES THAT DRAW ITS VISITORS

The Porch attracts a range of populations over the course of the day and week. Each population group has distinct needs and responds to different amenities and activities within the plaza. Visitors engaged in solitary activities, such as reading or writing, talking on the phone, or using electronics are more likely to occupy the east end, while those who come for social experiences – to talk or to eat – inhabit the rooms adjacent to The Meadow. More singletons than groups visit The Porch, but groups linger twice as long as solo-visitors.

To support a greater diversity of uses, the design of The Porch must accommodate groups of people who come to congregate in social spaces as well as singletons who seek out The Porch for solitude in which to relax or work.



Different rooms draw different activities

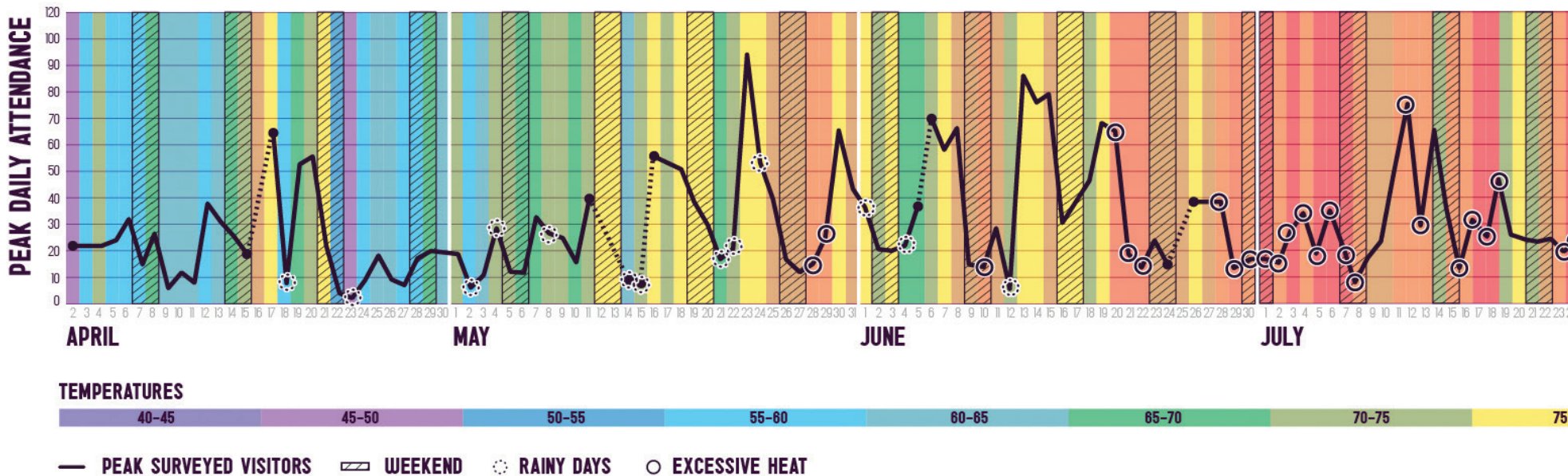
The Site

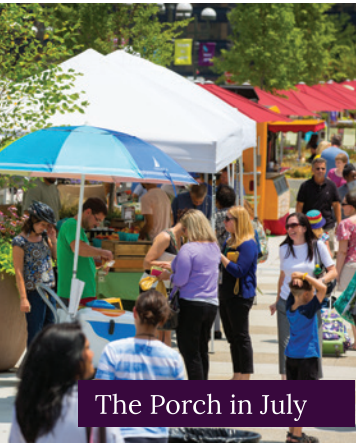
HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS INFORM THE WAY PEOPLE INHABIT THE PORCH

7 AS AN EXPOSED SPACE, THE PORCH MUST COUNTERACT HARSH ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS BY INTRODUCING SHADE AND SHELTERING FEATURES

The Porch is an exposed space, dramatically influenced by the weather and vulnerable to natural elements (excessive sunlight, heat, rain, and wind). Over the course of the data collection, rainy days put a damper on attendance at The Porch, as did excessive heat. In July and August, when average daily temperatures hovered between 80 and 95 degrees, shade became the major limiting factor for capacity at The Porch, with 80% of Porch users seeking a spot in the shade.

The design of The Porch must provide protection from the elements (shade from the sun, protection from the light that reflects off of the bright concrete pavement, and shelter from rain and wind).

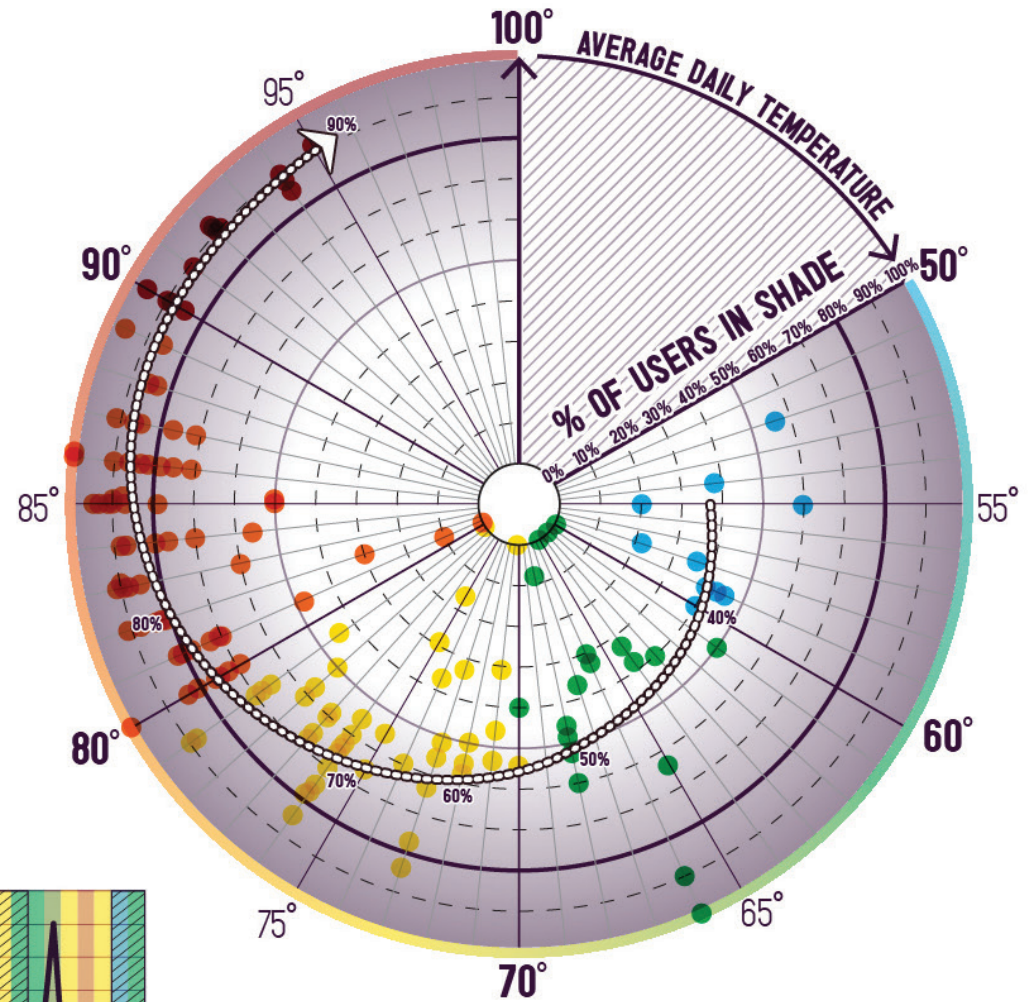




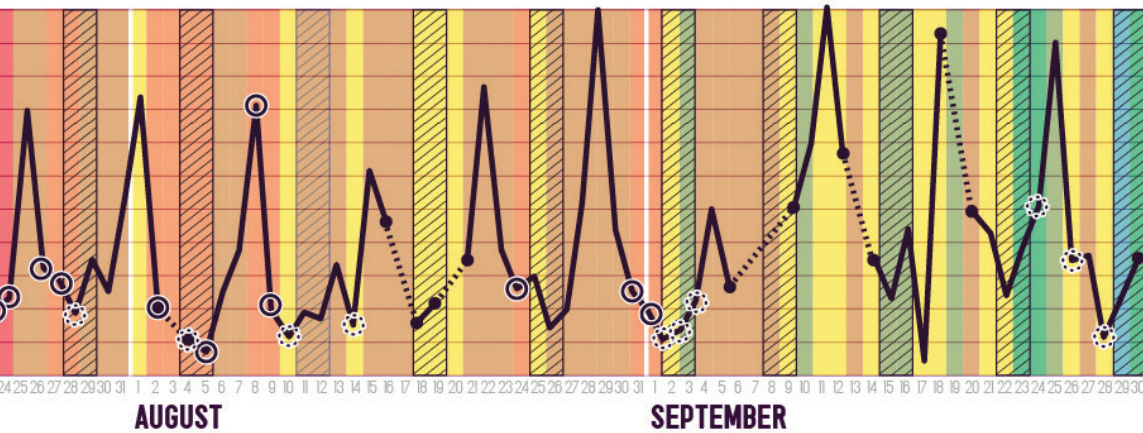
The Porch in July



The Porch in November



As temperatures increase, the majority of Porch users seek shade during their visit, making shaded space a determining factor of Porch capacity in summer months



Rain & excessive heat deter Porch users, as demonstrated by the graph of weather and peak daily attendance over time

During the summer months, shadows from nearby buildings do not reach The Porch to provide relief from the sun; in the winter, The Porch is often in shadow.

SHADE STUDY

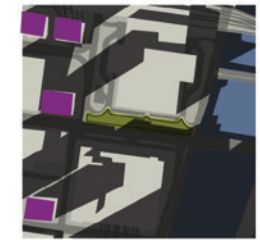
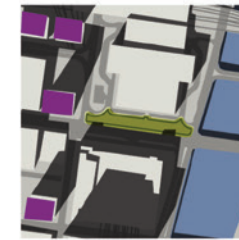
10:00 AM

12:00 PM

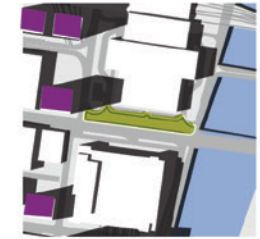
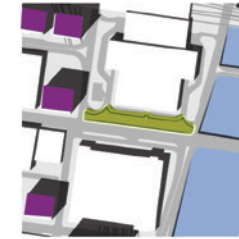
2:00 PM

4:00 PM

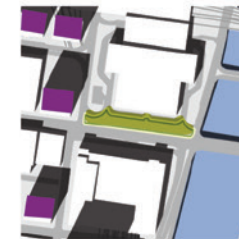
MARCH
1
END OF WINTER



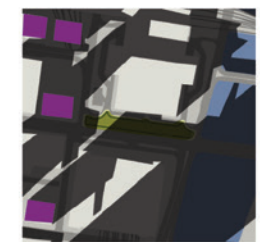
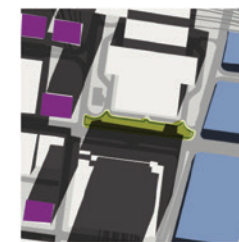
MAY
23
MOST POPULAR SPRING DAY



SEPTEMBER
12
MOST POPULAR FALL DAY



OCTOBER
31
HALLOWEEN



DECEMBER
21
WINTER SOLSTICE



- THE PORCH
- EXISTING BUILDING
- PROPOSED BUILDING

TIME OF YEAR AFFECTS LIGHT & SHADOW INTENSITY

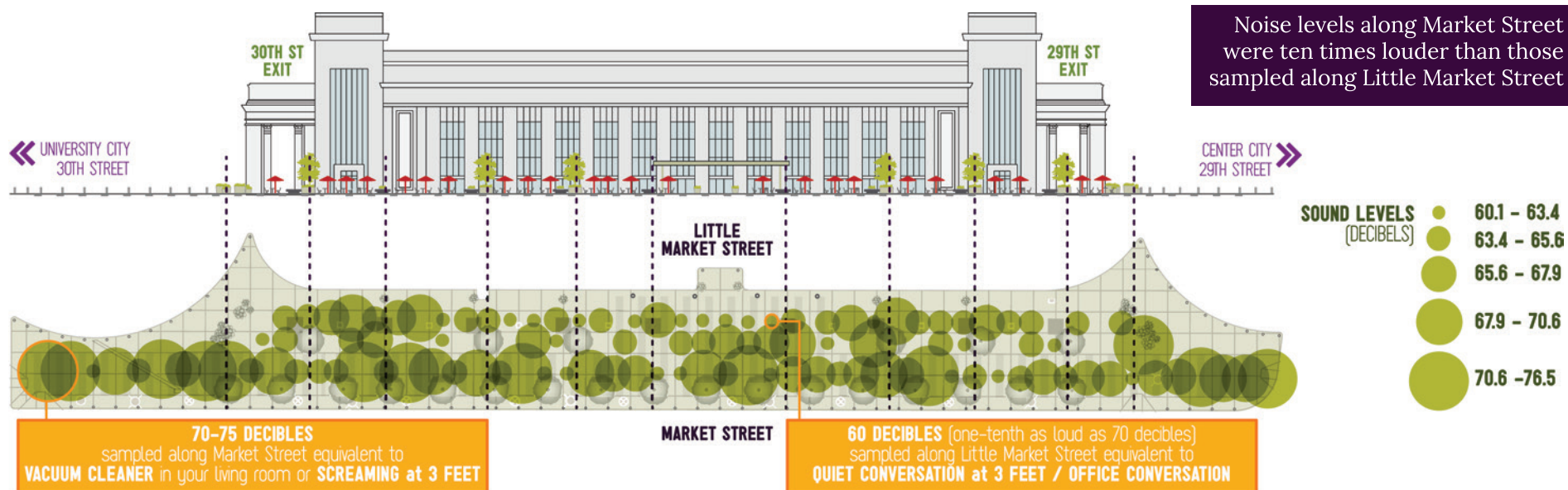
- LIGHT LEVEL
- SHADOW INTENSITY

8 AS AN ISLAND SURROUNDED BY RIVER AND ROADS, THE PORCH'S INTERPLAY WITH THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR SHADE AND SHELTER, AND ALSO SUGGESTS A NEED FOR BUFFERS FROM TRAFFIC

Urban elements at The Porch create their own environmental conditions requiring mitigation, particularly when compounded by natural elements and seasonal weather patterns. As the shade study depicts, the buildings surrounding The Porch shade the plaza with their shadows only during winter months, when the temperature is already low and the warmth of the sun would be welcome. In spring, summer, and fall, shadows from nearby buildings do not reach The Porch to ease light reflecting off the bright pavement or cool the heat radiating from dark surfaces.

Noise generated by Market Street's near-constant vehicular traffic is most perceptible along the southern edge of The Porch, though sound intensity falls dramatically as the distance from Market Street increases. Automobile speeds and fumes from traffic further detract from conditions at The Porch.

In addition to shade and shelter, the design of The Porch must buffer the plaza from traffic – and the noise, fumes, and chaos it creates.





9 AS A PAVED SURFACE BUILT ATOP BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE, THE PORCH MUST GROW GREENER, LIGHTLY



The Porch serves as a park space in an otherwise hardscaped urban environment, but it is a park without a soil bed below. Though The Porch cannot be planted in traditional fashion, the need and demand for more green remains.

Before The Porch, there were few trees and limited green space within a five-minute walk of 30th Street Station. 17,000 employees work within the same ¼-mile radius, and 850-2,500 pedestrians pass The Porch each hour. No wonder 41% of those surveyed reported that trees and plantings were the most impactful improvement. And when asked what amenities would make people more likely to spend time at The Porch, almost 30% of respondents suggested more trees, plants, or greenery. 36% suggested more shade.

The design of The Porch must find innovative ways to introduce natural landscape features to soften the space, absorb stormwater, register seasonal changes, add color and texture, and honor visitors' requests for more greenery.

The Power of Programming

HOW EVENTS & ACTIVITIES BROADEN THE USER BASE

10 AS UNIVERSAL CROWD PLEASERS, THE PRESENCE OF FOOD AND DRINK BOOSTS USE AND ENJOYMENT OF THE PORCH

Porch users take advantage of the outdoor dining opportunity provided by The Porch. When the weather is warm and sunny, the number of people eating lunch at The Porch matches the number eating indoors in Amtrak's South Waiting Room, and on farmers market and food truck days, The Porch experienced its highest occupancy levels. The food trucks, in particular, draw customers, suggesting that the lunchtime crowd welcomes the new variety and prepared foods offered by those vendors.

There is demand for continuous food presence at The Porch; the design must make room for prepared food and drink vendors, particularly at lunchtime.

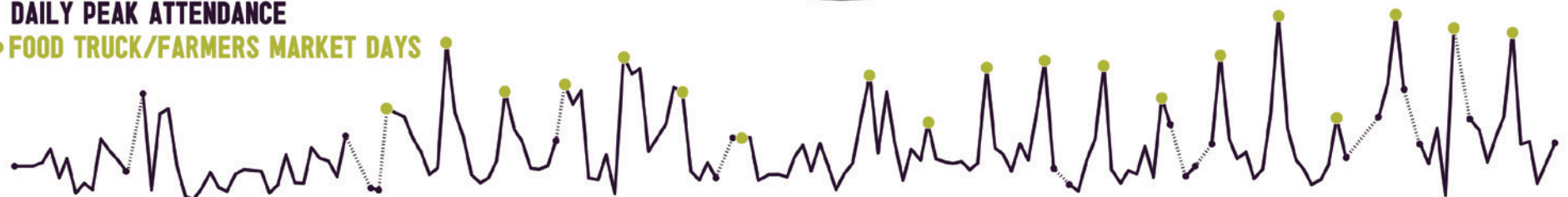


WHERE LUNCHES COME FROM ON A...



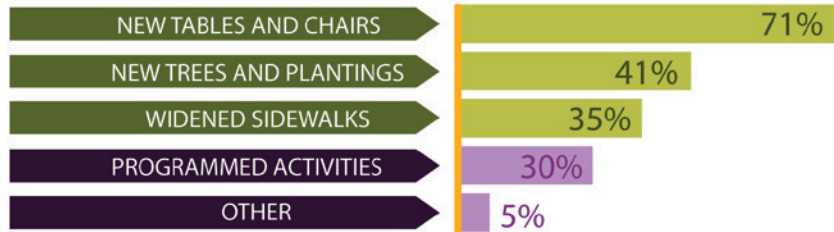
DAILY PEAK ATTENDANCE

- FOOD TRUCK/FARMERS MARKET DAYS



Food Truck/Farmers Market Wednesdays were winners in terms of Porch attendance

SURVEY QUESTIONS: WHICH RECENT IMPROVEMENTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?



AND WHAT OTHER AMENITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?



...AND SO ON



The Porch as study hall and conference room; additional amenities can encourage more working at The Porch

11 BEYOND FOOD AND DRINK, THE PORCH MUST EXPAND ITS MENU OF AMENITIES TO REACH ITS POTENTIAL AS A HOST TO PEOPLES' DAILY LIVES

The weekday population comprises mostly commuters who pass through The Porch during rush hour and office workers who frequent the space during lunch hour. In addition to table space and food options at lunch, the typical weekday visitor might enjoy access to coffee and newspapers in the morning; quiet, comfortable, and protected space equipped with Wi-Fi and electricity for telecommuting or outdoor meetings during the day; and space for a snack or drink – and maybe happy hour entertainment – at the end of the day.

With amenities that render The Porch attractive to a broader range of weekday visitors, The Porch can play better host to a greater diversity of activities that bring users to the plaza over a longer span of time.

On weekdays, the design of The Porch should offer amenities and programming that cater to commuters and office workers as well as those with portable-offices or studies - who might set up shop to populate The Porch during off hours.

12 AMENITIES ASIDE, THE DESIGN OF THE PORCH MUST MAKE ROOM FOR AN ECLECTIC CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS AND EVENTS TO HELP IT THRIVE AS A DESTINATION

On weekends, the population of The Porch is at once more local (with fewer commuters and more neighborhood residents and families) and more far-reaching (with visitors and out of towners). Similarly, special events (like concerts, performances, or games) hosted at The Porch tend to attract a more diverse group of Porch users than the typical workday crowd.

Within the uniform, linear shape of The Porch, the design must balance flex space with space for programs, preserving rooms or arenas that can host a range of programmed events and destination activities for all ages, encouraging active use of The Porch year round, and enticing visitors to enjoy longer stays at The Porch. The underutilized Meadow exhibits potential in this respect – at times densely populated by large scale programs, at times depopulated offering a retreat from city life.



Give & Take Little Circus



WXPN Free at Noon Concert | Photo by Ben Tran



Mini-Golf!



Farmers Market



Serenade



Beer Garden

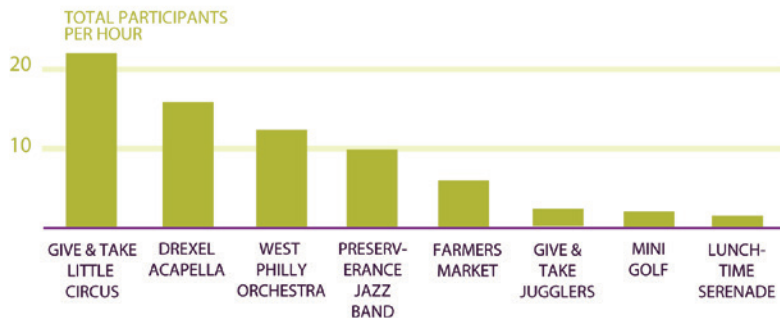


Drexel Acapella



West Philadelphia Orchestra

Some of the most successful programming at The Porch



Many programs & events have been successful at The Porch

The Porch in Context

HOW THE PORCH CAN BETTER SERVE & CONNECT WITH ITS SURROUNDING URBAN FABRIC



Picturesque, whether the backdrop is Philadelphia's skyline...

13 WITH ITS PRIME LOCATION AT THE FRONT DOOR TO THE CITY, THE DESIGN OF THE PORCH MUST PRESERVE VIEWS WORTHY OF A GRAND ENTRYWAY WHILE ALSO CULTIVATING AN IMAGE OF ITS OWN

Visitors traveling for business or pleasure constitute another population of Porch users – tourists and travelers who happen upon The Porch as they exit the train station, often carrying luggage, and making full use of the cameras and mapping applications on their smart phones. Much like the Rocky and LOVE statues, The Porch, with its unparalleled views of Center City's skyline, deserves distinction as a photo destination in Philadelphia.

Through public art, grade changes, viewshed preservation, and/or other interventions, the design of The Porch should create, enhance, and provide access to an iconic Philadelphia backdrop, sought out not only by tourists but by Philadelphians indulging in their City's architecture and public realm; for tourists, other services could facilitate urban exploration as well.



or The Porch, itself

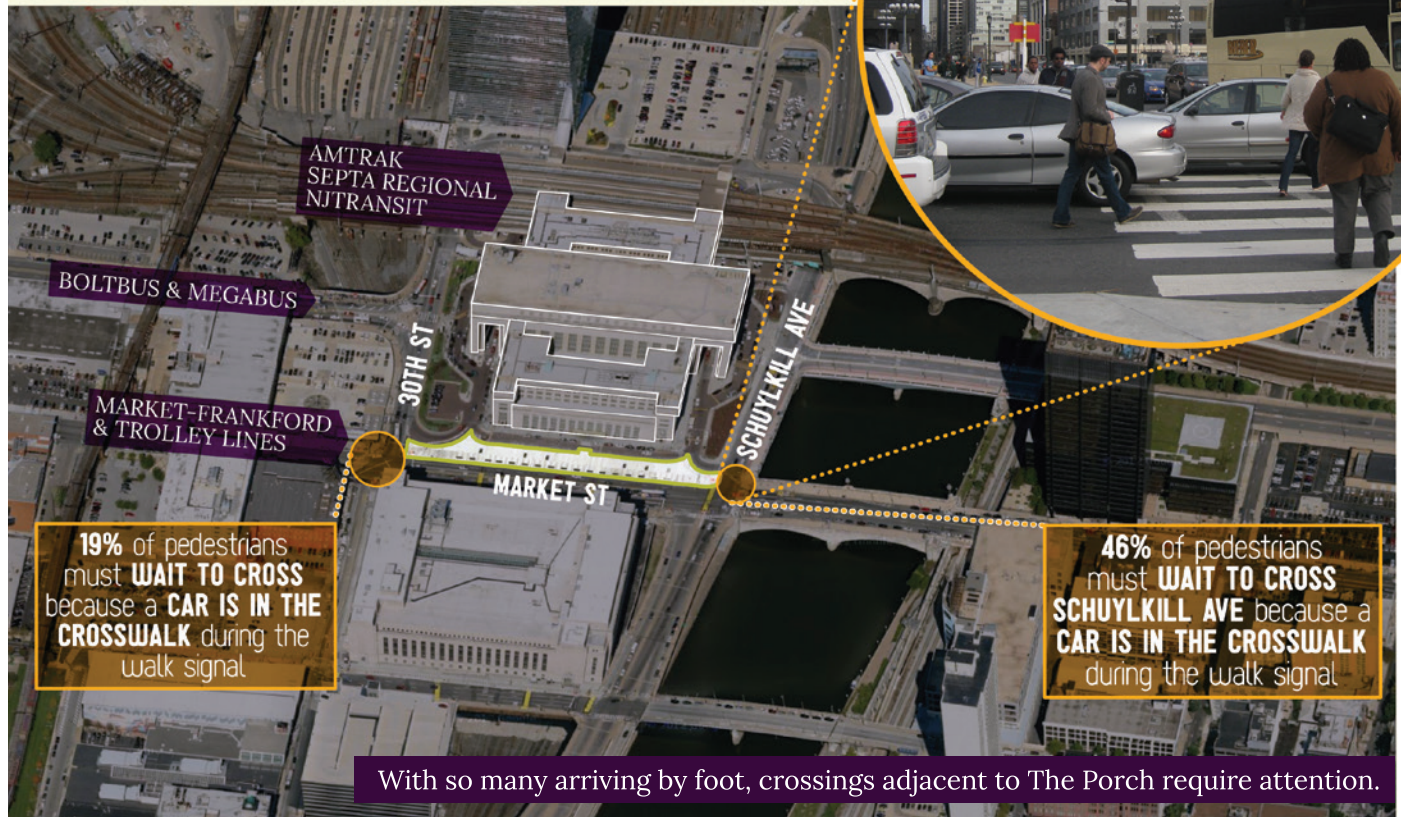
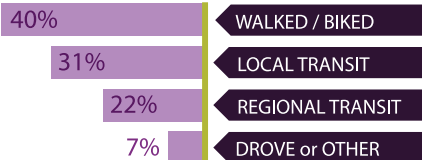
14 IN THE NEAR-TERM, THE PORCH MUST BETTER CONNECT WITH THE CITY BEYOND, NOT JUST VISUALLY BUT PHYSICALLY

The Porch is a pedestrian space close to several major transportation hubs but is surrounded by high-speed roads on three sides. At both the north and west ends, pedestrians must wait to cross during walk signals because cars are blocking the crosswalks.

The design work must extend past the physical edges of The Porch to encompass adjoining crosswalks and sidewalks, fostering safe and comfortable connections for pedestrians approaching The Porch. Strategies are also needed to improve the linkage between Amtrak, regional rail and SEPTA rail and subway stations.

SURVEY QUESTION:

HOW DID YOU GET TO THE PORCH TODAY?

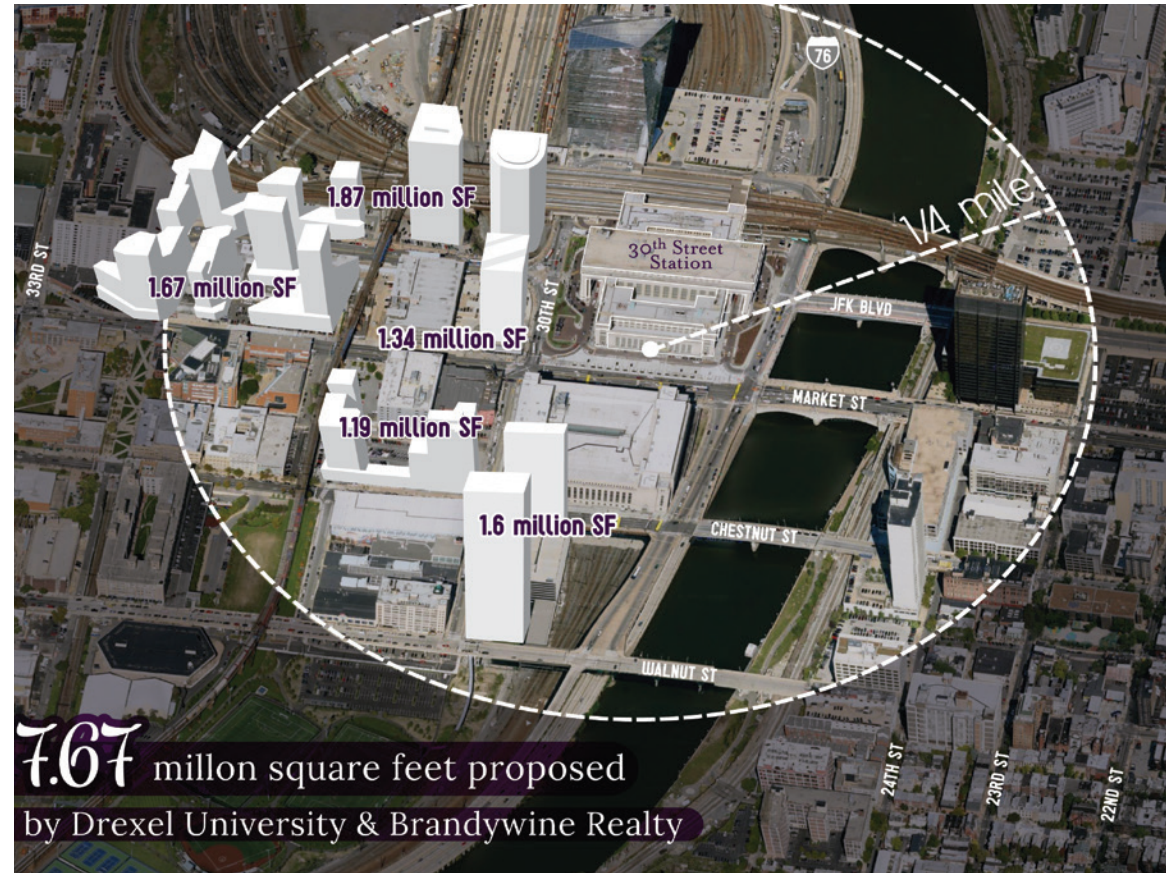


15 DESPITE THE SUCCESSES OF INCREMENTAL INVESTMENTS, IN THE LONG RUN, THE PORCH MUST BE DESIGNED WITH AN EYE TOWARD THE FUTURE, REMAINING OPEN TO GROWTH TO ACCOMMODATE NEW USES AND USERS

True to the incremental approach that University City District has embraced in building a new public space, it stands to reason that despite the early achievements of the first year at The Porch and the excitement swirling around the next phase in The Porch's design and development, The Porch will likely remain a work in progress. The scale of future development proposed for nearby blocks foreshadows demand for additional public space and amenities, and opportunity for possible expansion beyond its current footprint, just north of The Porch.

Little Market Street, the road that currently separates The Porch from Amtrak's South Waiting Room, is an underutilized shortcut for taxi cabs and other vehicles. People entering The Porch from the station's Food Court and South Waiting Room are more likely to be Porch users than people entering The Porch from any other access point, rendering the station's southern exit the natural gateway to The Porch. However, Little Market Street presents an auto-oriented gulf between the pedestrian-friendly Porch and the station.

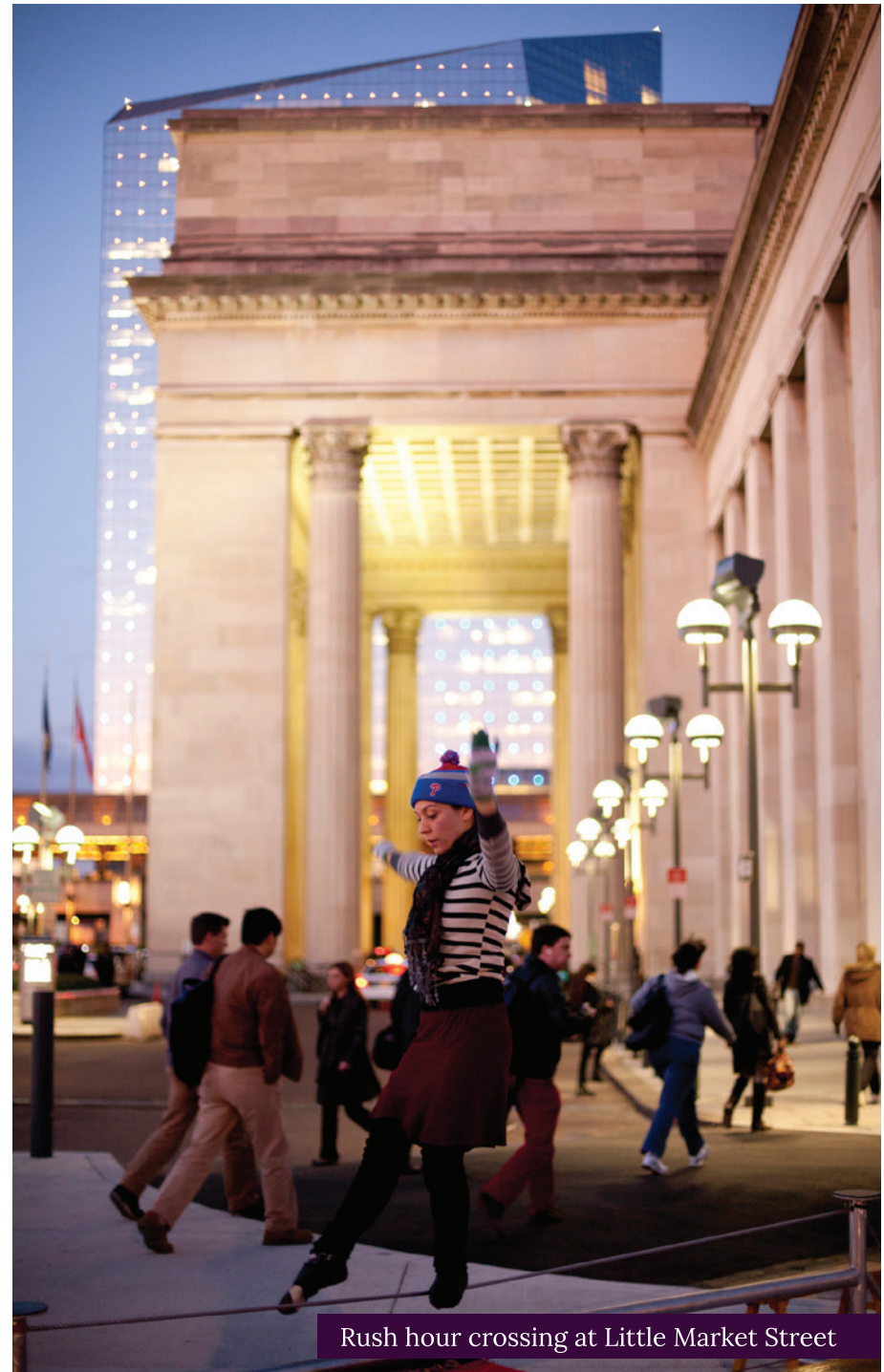
The design of The Porch must work with the current dimensions of the plaza, while also considering opportunities to grow where possible. Improving the connection between the station and The Porch by reclaiming auto-oriented space for pedestrians would help the station become more of a multi-modal hub and The Porch be more easily accessed by the 93% of its visitors who arrive on foot, by transit, or by bicycle.



Proposed development within a quarter-mile of The Porch



As an auto-oriented space, Little Market Street is underutilized



Rush hour crossing at Little Market Street







THE PORCH

AT 30TH STREET STATION

with generous
support from:

 Knight Foundation

ARTPLACE


W I L L I A M P E N N
F O U N D A T I O N



For more information about this report and its accompanying analysis,
contact Seth Budick, UCD's Manager of Policy and Research at seth@universitycity.org

For additional information about The Porch or UCD's approach to placemaking,
contact Prema Katari Gupta, UCD's Director of Planning and Economic Development at prema@universitycity.org

Except where noted, photography by Ryan Collerd, Conrad Erb, and Ben Tran