

KENT LION'S PLAYGARDEN | FLEXIBLE URBAN SPACE

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ABSTRACT

Established in 2017, the World Relief Seattle (WRS) Hillside Paradise Parking Plots Community Garden in Kent, Washington, has provided a place for immigrants and refugees to build a diverse community, alleviate food insecurity, foster economic independence, and empowerment through growing a range of culturally valued foods. WRS is exploring Kent for potential lots to expand to its secondary community garden program. Thus, the main objective of this project, called Kent Lions PlayGarden, is to propose a potential site and design a community garden for education and market opportunity. The site selection and design proposal align with the King County 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) with guiding principles and commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, remediating flooding, and directing climate action in priority areas to establish resilient and sustainable communities.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The site selected is an existing park called Kent Lions SkatePark. It features a skateboarding fixture located on the south, a large open area in the middle and a basketball court on the north entrance. To the west is a large park and ride and on its east is a train track. The two ambitious goals in implementing the new garden are to incorporate it into continuous green connectivity and promote its multiplicity as an educational site, active play place, and market.

- The first objective is to stitch and connect the bike paths within the urban core to provide easier travel from east to west, creating a green connection from Mill Creeks Canyon and Green River. It will promote accessibility to existing community amenities, such as parks and food banks, and linkage to the Interurban Trail, a regional bicycle and pedestrian trail. This connection will nurture a low-carbon alternative option for urban mobility within Kent.
- The second objective is to introduce an adventure play space and improve the existing basketball court and skatepark area to reactivate the space as a gathering urban space.

The varied social programming supports park usage and supports the community's needs, especially the new gardeners.

The garden will feature a pavilion, raised garden bed, onsite soil and compost system, and rainwater catchment infrastructure to strengthen Kent Lion Community Garden's self-sufficiency. It will also be interwoven with stormwater features and bioswales to remediate flooding and treat stormwater runoff before reaching the Green River.

The new site will be a new node in downtown Kent, it will be a park/garden hybrid or a playgarden that will serve as a public space amenity, improve food access and build a community to empower the new gardeners.

PROPOSED SOLUTION



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the major constraints of the project is the highway SR-167 which bisects the connectivity of Kent. The design proposal reimagined bridges and underpasses as untapped potential spaces for social meeting places. The approach ensured seamless connectivity from east to west as well as to promote a new gateway and placemaking for Kent. The Meeker St. Underpass enhancement aims to repair the damage of urban freeways. Continuing City of Kent Meet Me on Meeker St. pedestrian enhancement project, adapting the underpass to become a pedestrian tunnel encourages multimodal transportation, whether it be walk, bike or roll, by safely connecting local and historic destinations to the regionally significant Green River and Interurban Trails.

Another design approach implemented is the densification of the existing Park and Ride to accommodate Kent's future growth. The design proposed the parking lot to be divided and converted into mixed use buildings that offer affordable housing that is suitable for our gardeners. The configuration of the buildings allows a flexible use of the space with parking concentrated on the west for easier access to transit service and the east where the proposed buildings are adjacent to the open space. The plaza, located at the center, will serve as a leisure retreat and event space. Its seamless paving that runs across from the plaza to the PlayGarden allows the intersecting street to be isolated and transformed into a street market or farmers market that greatly benefit the gardeners and introduce a new marker for Kent's Identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Unused urban space remains as forgotten wasteland or gaps between buildings and other constructions. These spaces have a high potential for reconstruction and repurposing by integrating them into the community, and for creating stunning spaces by distinguishing their specific character. The Kent Lion's PlayGarden and Meeker St. Underpass enhancements are such spaces that were adapted to the current urban fabrics with alterations that promote climate resiliency, food and green space access, and community support for refugee and immigrant communities. Building the city inwards and repurposing unused spaces as community gardens, play areas and residential buildings is another sustainable strategy of urban developments. These conversions breathe new life into the underutilized spaces while giving voice to the underserved communities.

REFERENCES

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- [Paradise Parking Plots Community Garden.](#) World Relief Western Washington. (2022)
- [Meeker Street.](#) KPG. (2020)

