Prairie Line Trail Redesign

Play, Pause, and Stimulation

The Prairie Line Trail will be transformed into an age-inclusive space, operating on the core principles of universal design to specifically center the needs of both the elderly and youth. My approach balances dedicated areas for rest and activity across the entire corridor. New comfortable *Pause* nodes feature ergonomic, high-back padded seating and clear, large-format signage and audio wayfinding for safe navigation. Simultaneously, there will be integrated active *Play* spots, such as built-in chalkboards and games, primarily for youth.
Crucially, shared *Stimulation* spaces, including flexible vendor booths and accessible audio log posts, are designed to appeal equally to both age groups, fostering genuine social connections.

By strategically implementing these features in previously empty, open sections of the trail, the design fundamentally makes the corridor into a destination, promoting community resilience, safety, and widespread public use

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Overview

SWOT Analysis

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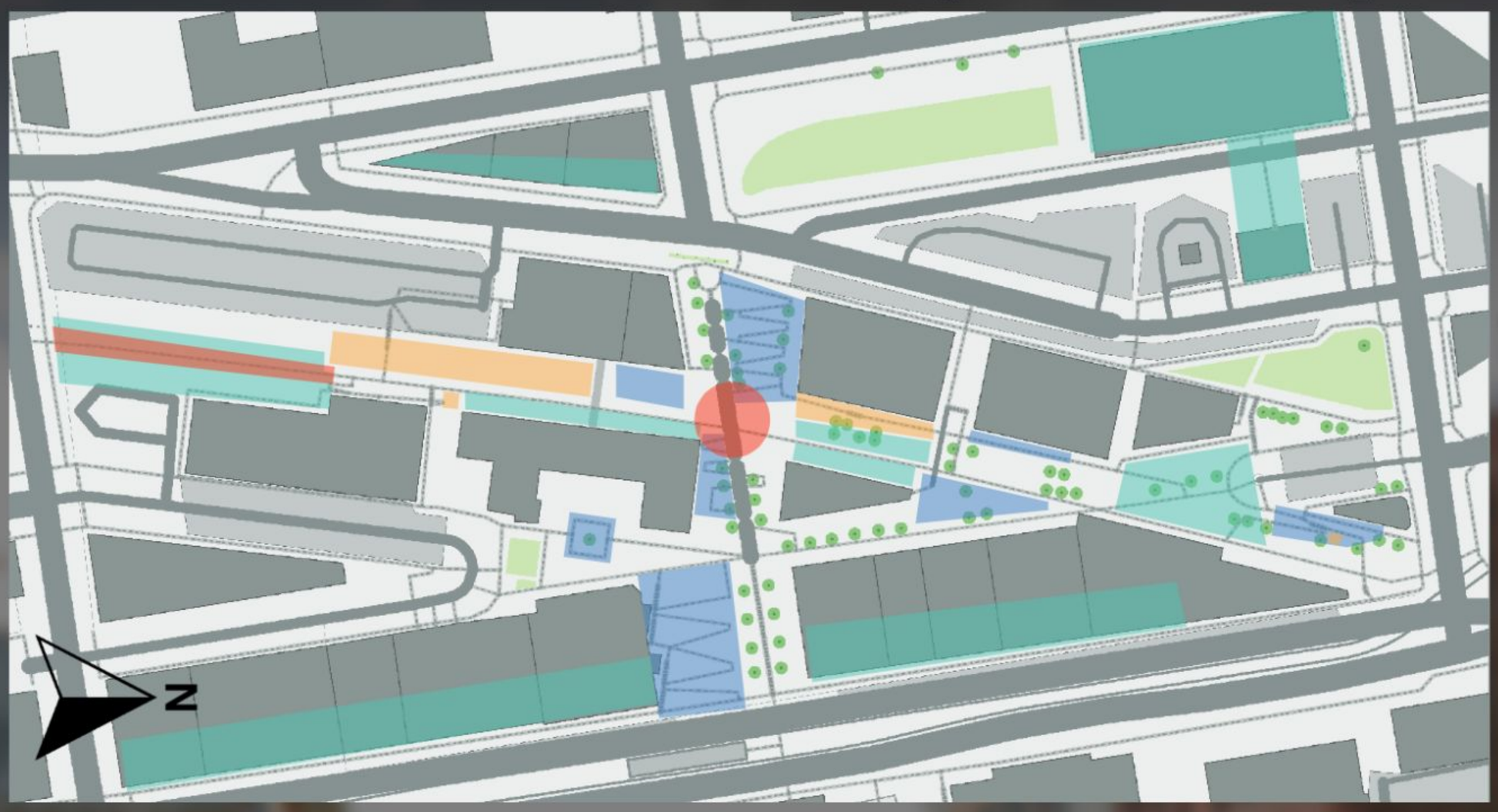
Conceptual Design

SWOT Analysis Map



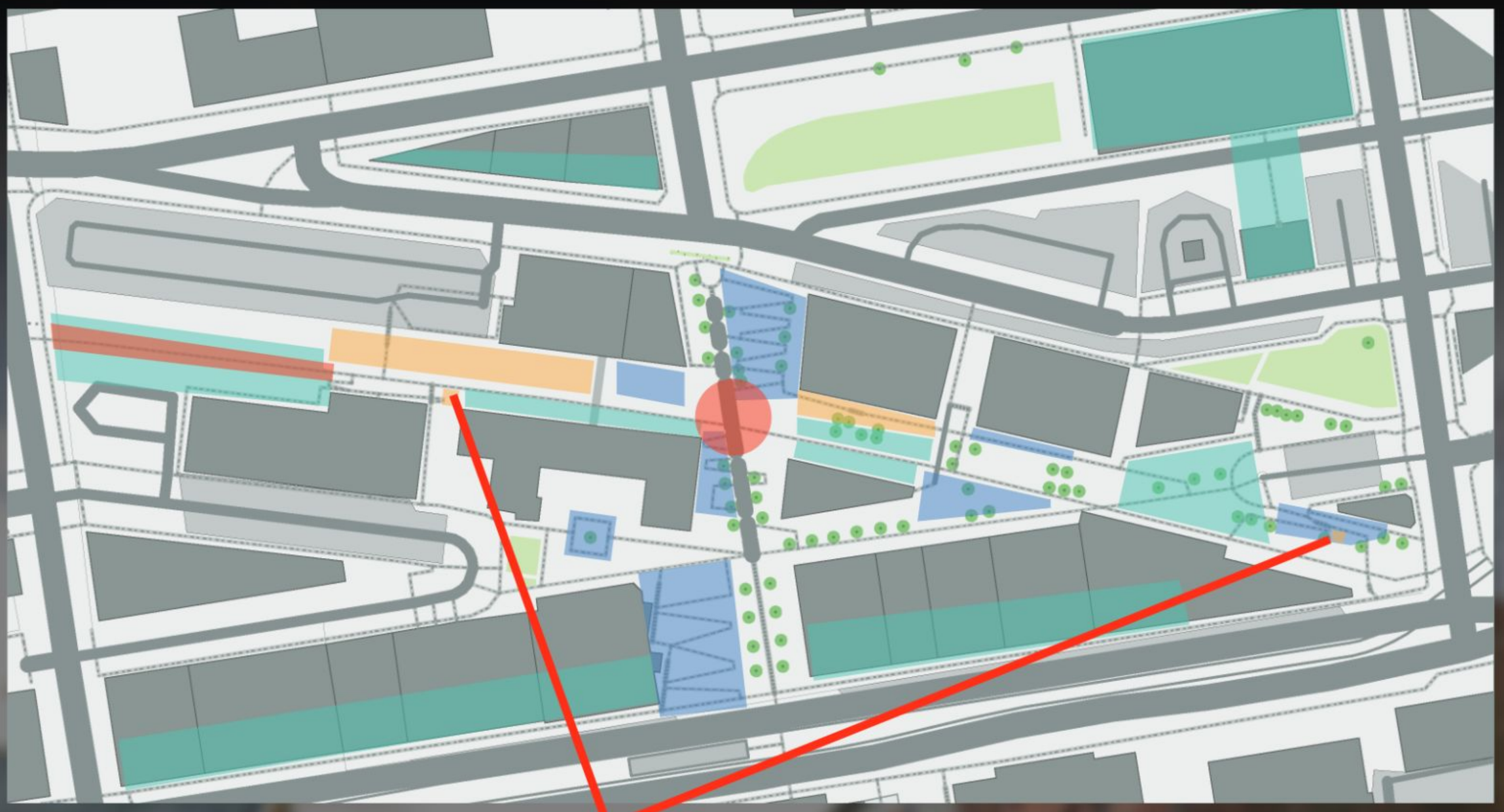
Strengths

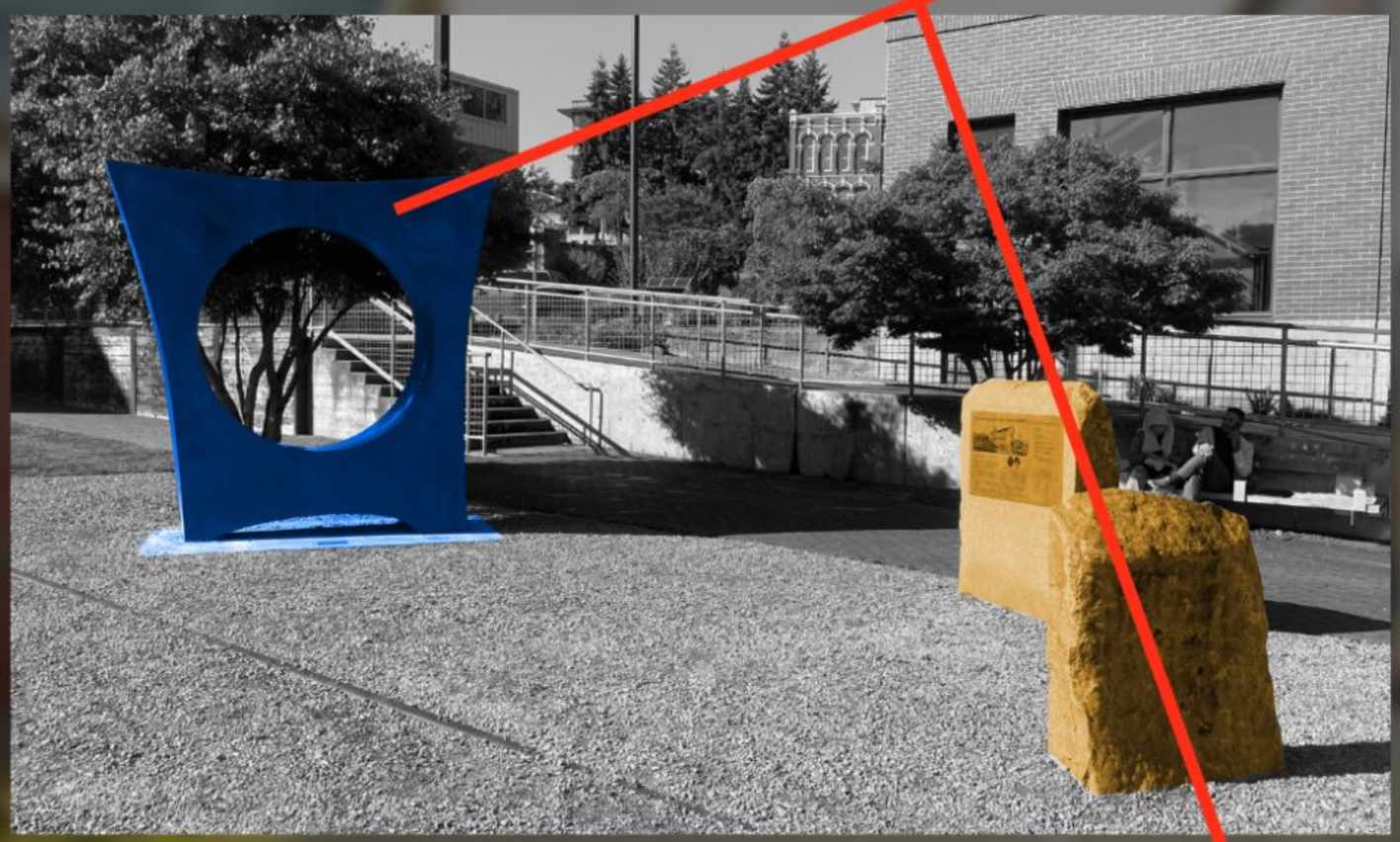
Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

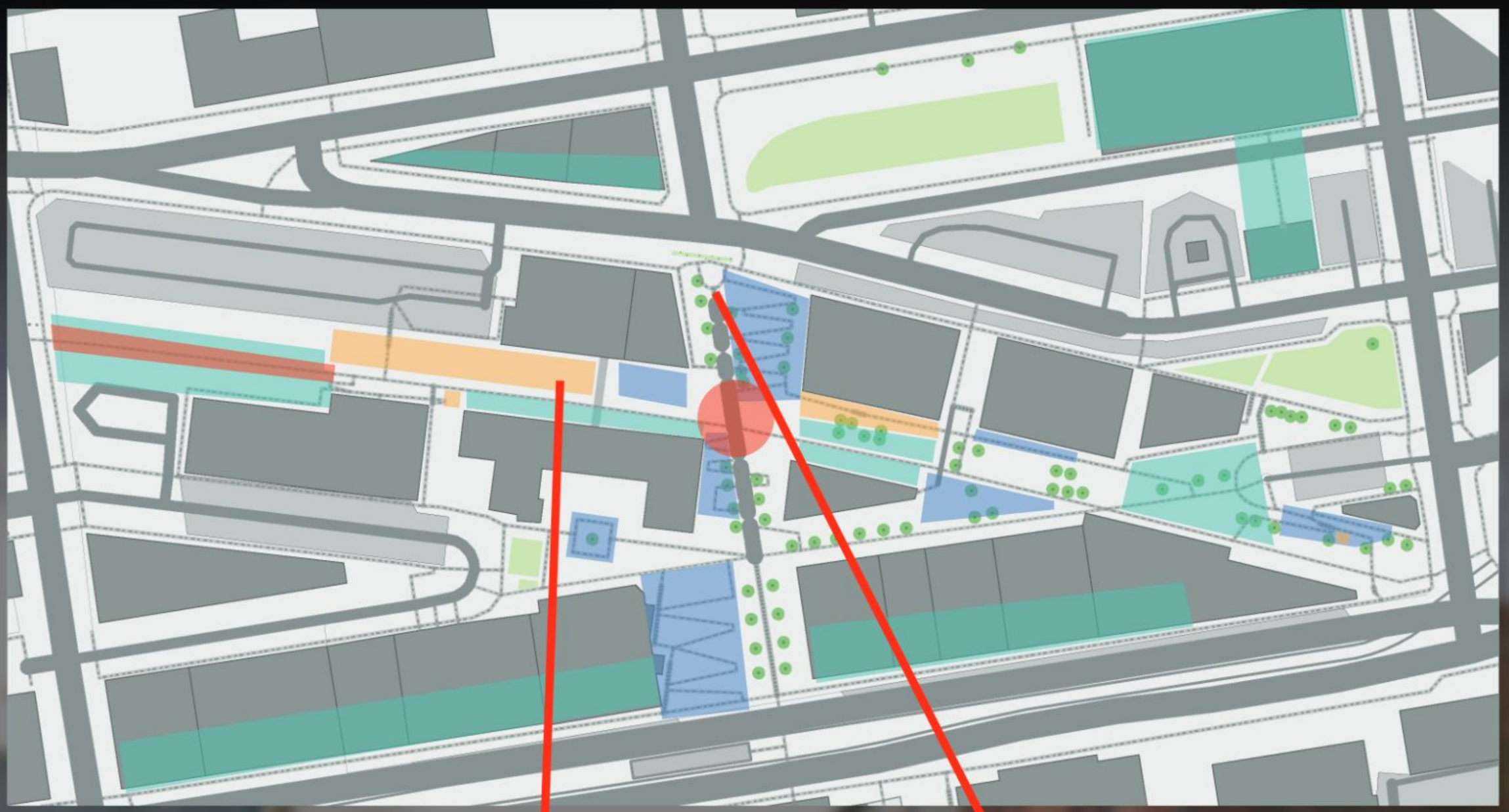
- Mostly flat trail, easy for walking or biking.
- ADA-compliant paths accommodate elderly, strollers, and children.
- Art, furniture, and infrastructure reflect trail's history and theme.
- Rest areas with seating and partial shade throughout.
- Close to campus, businesses, transit, and parking, supporting events and activities.
- Flat ground allows easy setup for events and activities.
- Central location near campus, transit, and businesses ensures accessibility.
- Local businesses can partner or set up booths along the trail.
- History and culture support interactive and educational programming.
- Underused spaces can be transformed into activity or rest zones.
- Functions more as a pass-through corridor than a destination.
- Limited shade and uncomfortable seating, especially for elderly users.
- Lacks basic amenities like restrooms, fountains, and handrails.
- Text-heavy signage with small print limits engagement for all ages.
- Linear layout feels monotonous and discourages exploration.
- Low lighting and fewer visitors increase risks of vandalism and safety issues.
- High maintenance costs may lead to neglected or broken amenities.
- Overcrowding could stress elderly and children and reduce usability.
- Added amenities raise hygiene and health concerns.
- Interactive elements pose potential injury and liability risks.

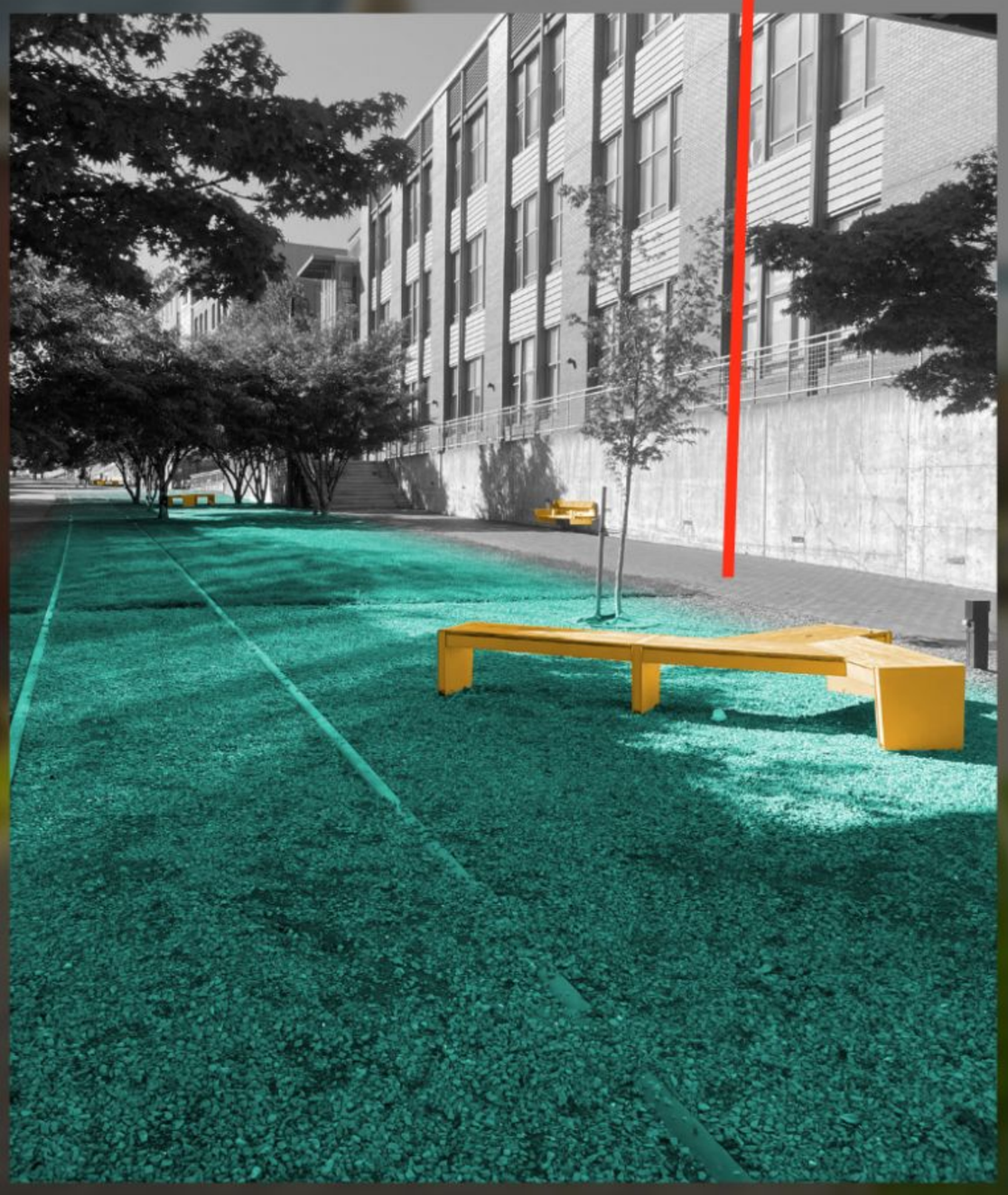


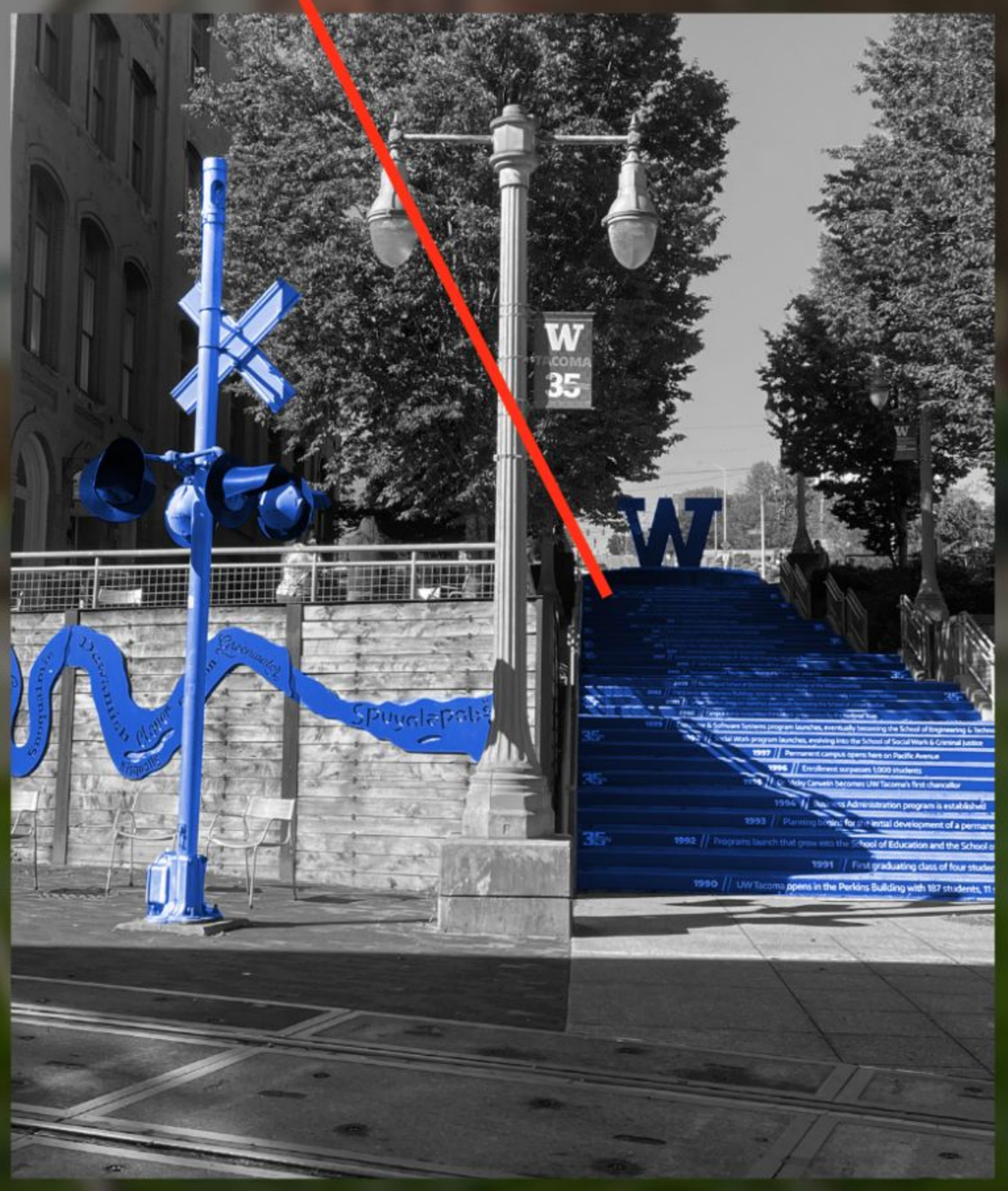


Art, furniture, and infrastructure reflect trail's history and theme, such as the bronze structure Maru, which honors the Japanese Language School. However, signage and information about it are mostly in small print.

Another example of small print information plaques along the trail.

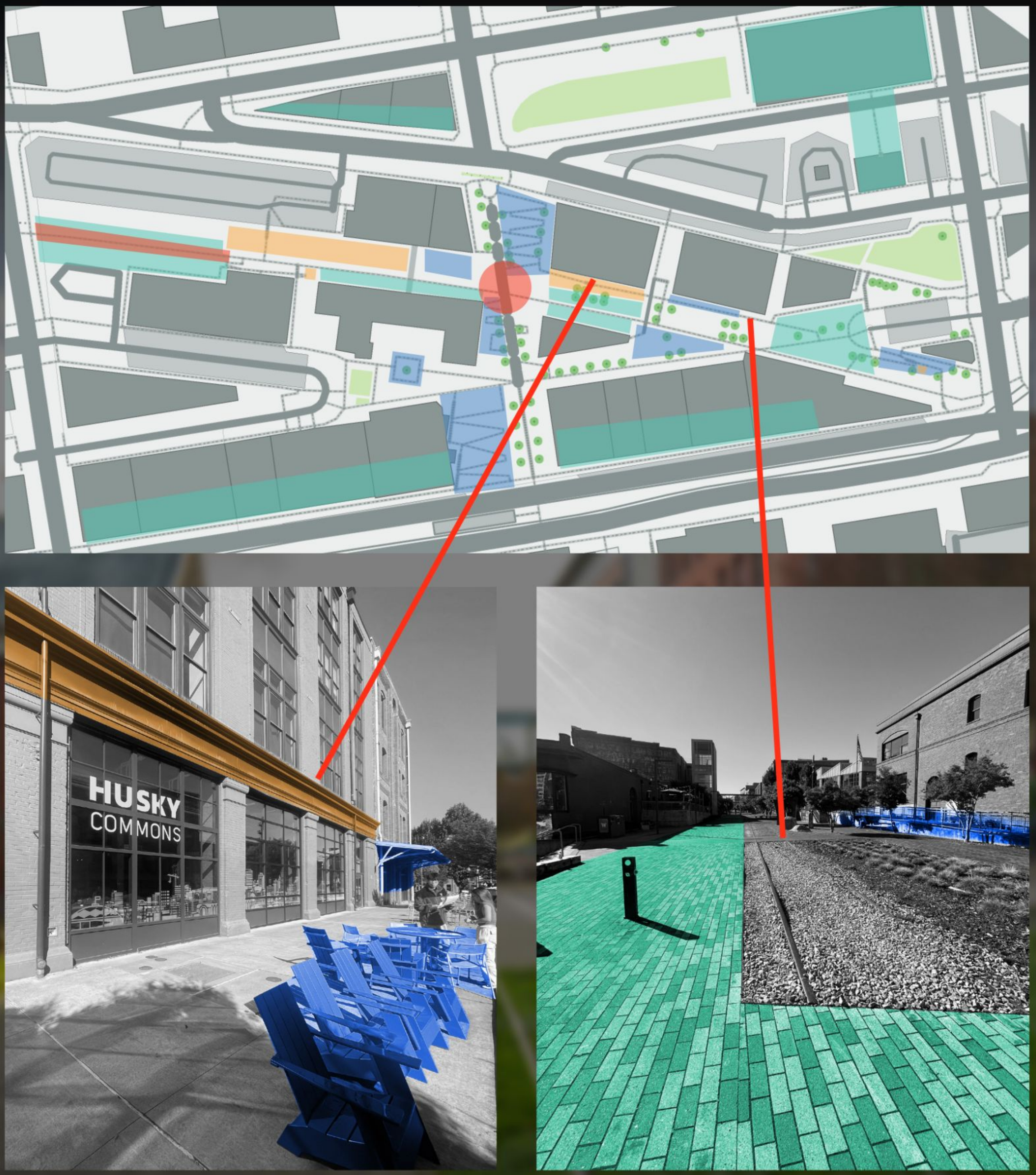






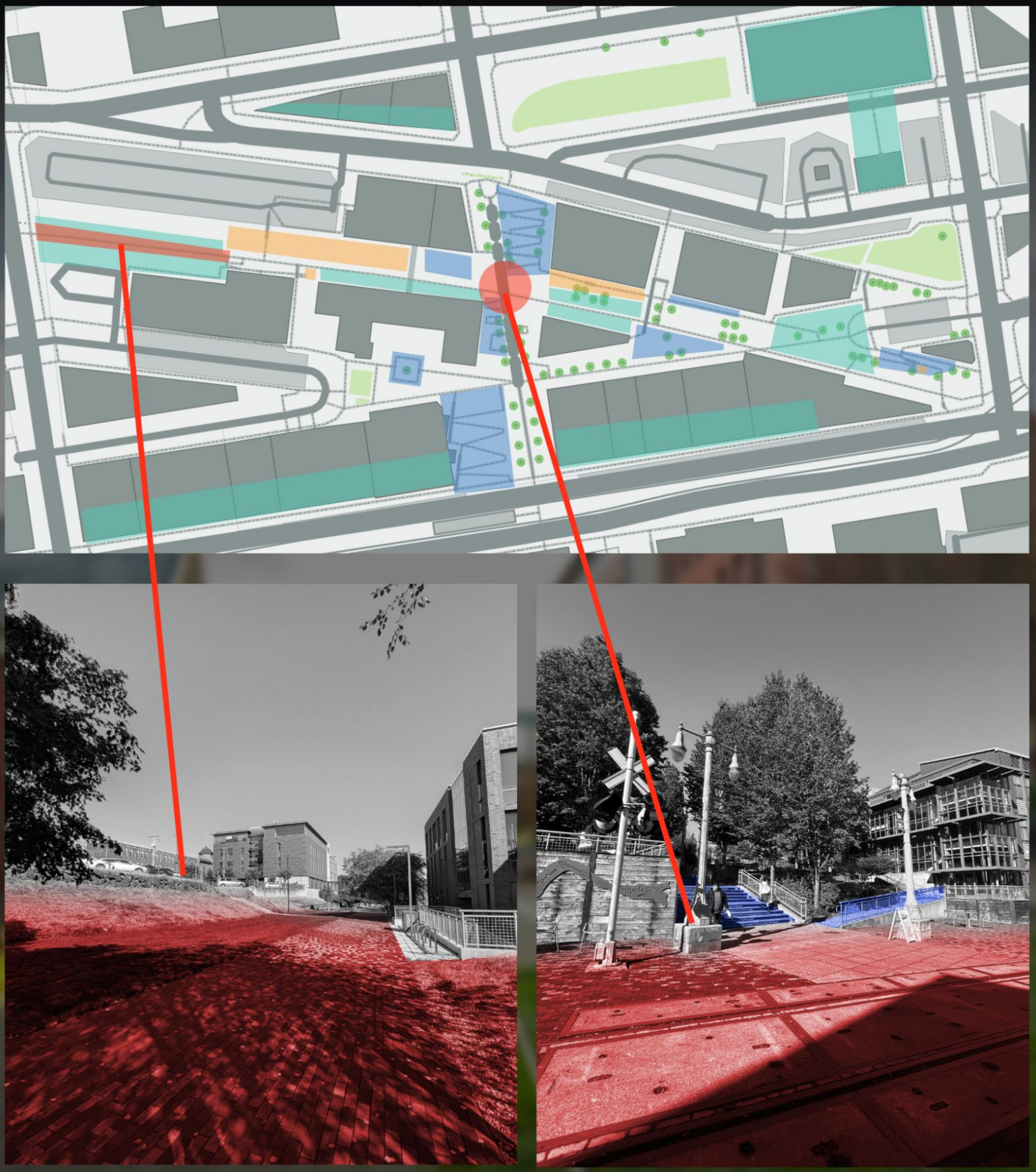
More art, furniture, and infrastructure that matches the trail's history and theme.

The trail itself has a lot of unused "dead" spaces. Seating that are located nearby are not comfortable enough because of their lack of backrests, padding, and being too low.



The trail is mostly flat with available seating, ADA compliant ramps, hand rails, partial shade and different types of material on the ground.

Additional shade can be installed.



Two different types of threats. South side of the trail is too empty, too quiet. Might be more dangerous during night because of lack of lighting and natural surveillance

Center of trail might act as a chokepoint when it gets too busy.

Sun Path Diagram

Summer Solstice
June 21, 2026

- Sunrise
- Position of Sun
- Sunset
- Path of sun
- Prevailing Winds

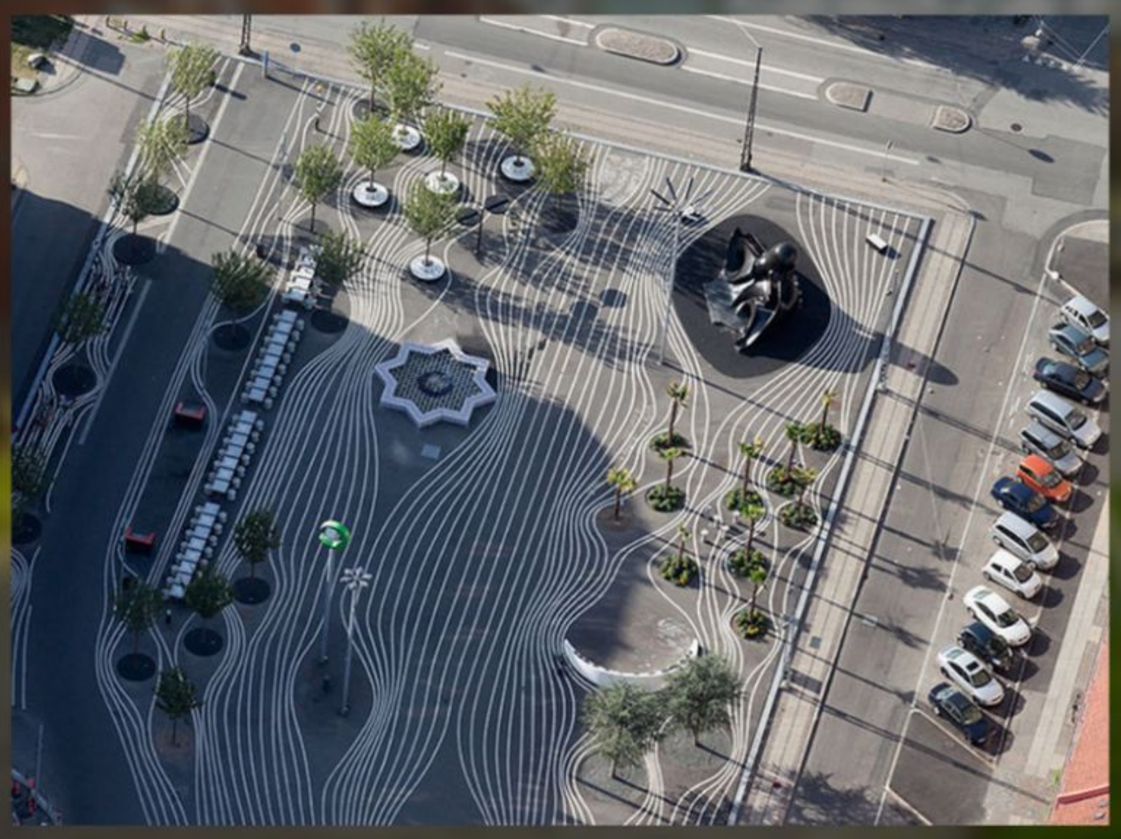
Winter Solstice
December 21, 2026

- Sunrise
- Position of Sun
- Sunset
- Path of sun
- Prevailing Winds

Case Studies

The Underline Miami, Florida, USA

The Underline in Miami, Florida, is a 10.5-mile linear park and urban trail developed beneath the city's elevated Metrorail system. Designed by James Corner Field Operations and opened its first phase in 2021, the trail transforms underused transit infrastructure into a vibrant public corridor connecting multiple neighborhoods. The trail includes rest areas with benches, drinking fountains, and fitness zones suitable for seniors. Play areas and interactive art installations give children and families reasons to explore and linger. With lighting, wayfinding, and consistent shade from tree canopies, The Underline provides a welcoming space for both active recreation and quiet relaxation, turning underused urban infrastructure into a safe, inclusive corridor. The Underline demonstrates how linear parks can intentionally support minority user groups such as children and the elderly through thoughtful access, seating, shade, and varied programming.



Superkilen Copenhagen, Denmark

Superkilen Park is a public space created to reflect the diversity of its surrounding neighborhood. At 750 meters long, stretches through the Nørrebro neighborhood, divided into three distinct zones to represent 60+ different cultures. The three zones are the Red Square for culture and sport, the Black Market for gathering and markets, and the Green Park for relaxing and play. The key design feature is the collection of over 100 actual artifacts, street furniture, neon signs, play equipment, etc., imported from around the world and installed in the park. The variety of passive zones, such as Black Market benches from Morocco, and active zones, such as boxing rings from Thailand, ensures it appeals to all ages, including children and seniors, by offering familiar elements from their home countries. Superkilen creates a shared public realm that welcomes all generations through color, culture, and connection.

Case Studies

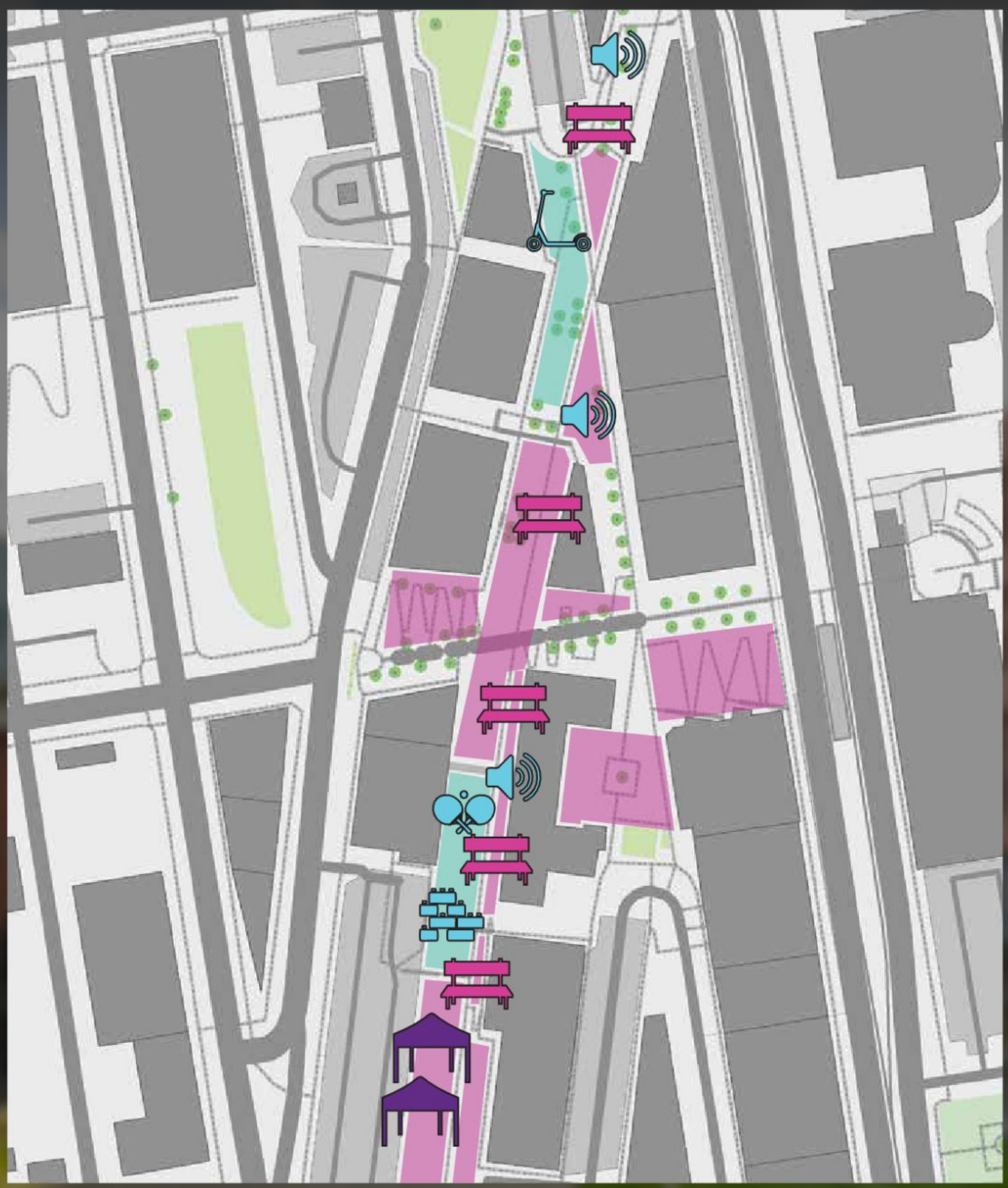
Seoullu 7017 Skygarden Seoul, South Korea

The Seoullo 7017 Skygarden is an elevated linear park in Seoul, South Korea, built upon a former vehicle highway overpass from 1970. This transformation turned obsolete infrastructure into a vibrant pedestrian public space, stretching 983 meters, connecting 17 different urban sections and neighborhoods. This skygarden displays 24,000 plants and provides various activities, such as the Pebble Foot Pool and the Bangbang Playground, encouraging active engagement and exploration. The abundance of shade, seating, and even indoor areas such as tea cafes, flower shops, and libraries promote both leisure and rest time. This combination of numerous amenities for both interactivity and relaxation directly addresses the needs of both children and the elderly.

The 606 (Bloomingdale Trail) Chicago, Illinois, USA

The 606, also known as the Bloomingdale Trail, is a linear park that was previously an unused rail line. It connects four neighborhoods in northwest Chicago, creating 3 continuous miles of parks and trails. This project serves as a key commuter and recreational artery, integrating durable planting beds, varied seating nooks, and public art along the main path. This is very similar to my vision of the Prairie Line Trail, both being past rail lines converted to a pathway for pedestrians. The 606 directly addresses mobility needs for the elderly, and has various built in gathering and viewing areas to encourage both passive observation and active engagement, relevant to both my chosen marginalized groups, children and seniors. It shows how a linear space can be designed for stopping, not just moving.

Conceptual Design - Map



Pause

Play

Play and Pause Nodes

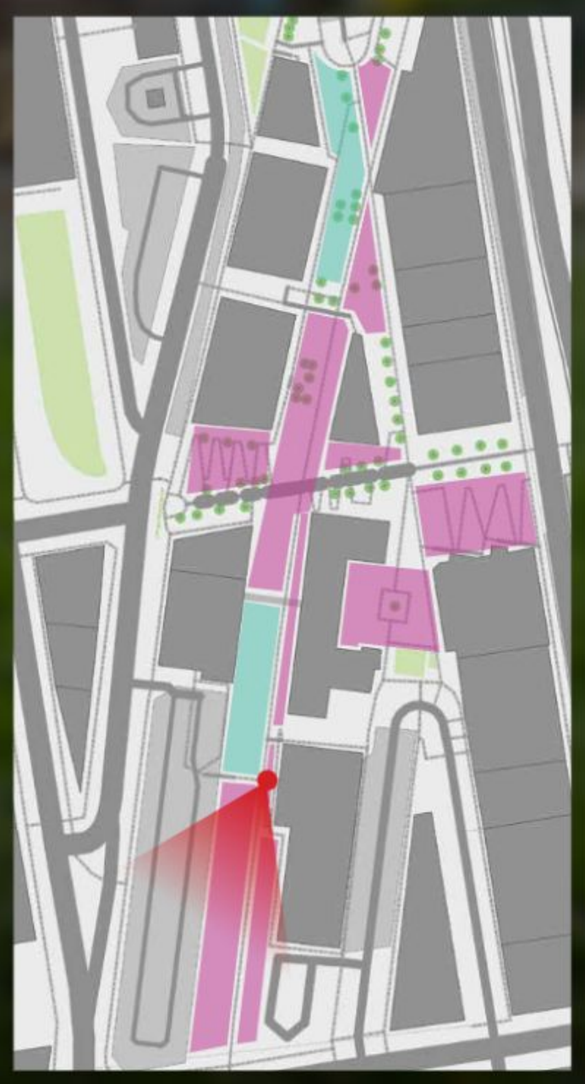
The Prairie Line Trail's transformation integrates distinct but connected Pause and Play nodes to serve all ages and abilities. Pause nodes prioritize comfort and safety for the elderly and those seeking rest, featuring ergonomic padded seating under shade structures, easily legible large signage, and accessible audio log posts for those with low vision. Adjacent Play zones are designed for active restoration, incorporating stimulating amenities like ping pong tables, areas for building blocks, and integrated chalk walls. Crucially, the entire space supports movement through a smooth, dedicated red lane for wheeled users (bikes and scooters) and a rougher brick road for extra grip in slippery conditions, all while being anchored by flexible vendor booths and community zones that act as shared Stimulation spaces for social exchange.

Conceptual Design - Renders

This rendering captures a highly activated Play node, showing the age-inclusive spirit of the design. The area features a vibrant mix of amenities designed for fun activities. A ping pong table and a low chalk wall provide sport and creative Stimulation primarily for youth and students. Opposite to this energy, the Pause element is catered to the elderly with a dedicated audio log post for accessibility and information, and comfortable nearby seating. The entire zone pops out with a checkerboard rubber floor, which is both visually energetic and serves the practical purpose of being a safer, softer surface for activities. The installation of purple sail shades provides necessary sun shade while matching the university's colors, further connecting to the campus and promotes a sense of shared identity.

Conceptual Design - Renders

This rendering illustrates the integration of the Pause and Stimulation nodes, showcasing a public space where different age groups can coexist. The left side features an accessible Pause node, providing high-comfort and secure rest with a shaded, padded bench designed for the elderly. On the trail is a smooth, dedicated red lane that accommodates wheeled users. Extending into the open space are flexible vendor booths, serving as a prime Stimulation zone for community economic activity, student displays, and cultural exchange, which benefits both young entrepreneurs and residents seeking local goods, transforming a previously empty section of the trail into a vibrant, yet relaxing spot.



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