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SOCIAL EQUITY THROUGH DESIGN

by

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## ABSTRACT

### SOCIAL EQUITY THROUGH DESIGN

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Historically targeted racialized policies and the continuation of socioeconomic inequality in Dallas have ushered in disparities in the quality of public spaces and amenities. Public spaces are significant because they provide cultural representation, economic opportunities, and social integration. The study analyzed five public spaces for six weeks across the city of Dallas to determine the success or challenges they provided to the community. The current demographics determined the location of the space of the research to show representation in each category of upper, middle, and lower-income communities. The visit to each park took place once a week for one hour at noon. The observation included accessibility, security, experience, sustainability, and comfort. In addition, the experiment analyzed the demographics and interaction of the space. The results showed how public spaces in predominantly Hispanic and Black communities lacked amenities compared to White neighborhoods. Hence, a public place's success derives from engaging activities and cultural representation. However, because of current and historical socioeconomic inequality, lower-income communities face negligence in the design of public spaces. Instead of reinforcing inequality systems from the past, designers



can empower these communities by promoting equity and addressing inclusion when designing public spaces in Dallas and globally.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, the profound growth of economic inequality has barred prolonged opportunities for many Americans. The existence and deception of division within equity have rapidly augmented poverty rates in communities of color. Even with its substantial economic developments, the city's lack of distribution of social, economic, and health resources emanates from its vast history of segregation and unremitting outcomes in the exploitation of people of color, who do not retain the ability to profit from economic stability (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018).

The prevalence of social inequality has led to a universal phenomenon in cities by local socioeconomic conditions. There is a disparity in economic and social opportunity between low and high-income neighborhoods located across Dallas, Texas. While the metropolitan region is experiencing new development and abundant job opportunities, it is impacting most Black or Brown people with limited resources in the southern part of Dallas (Martin Moore, and Schindler 2015). The city's negligence of adding equal opportunity through urban planning for low-income communities creates a predominant equity gap. Due to the scarcity of public amenities, there is no physical appeal that boosts the communities' economy and safety. If the civic endeavor is devoted to redesigning the city to shatter the unequal cycle of sprawl and ideologies – then Dallas can enter a renowned generation that prioritizes accessibility to social, political, economic, and cultural opportunities for all residents.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Racial and economic inequality is profoundly embedded and affects communities throughout the country. The scholarly literature will include historical evidence of redlining and any other racially targeted policy in Dallas that eventually became the foundation of the consequences minorities still face today. In addition, they will include current issues and scientific data on how the lack of public amenities further creates social issues. Designers and urban planners have the power to create spaces that provide social equity opportunities for future generations, thus changing the negative consequences of inadequate infrastructure and public places. Therefore, the literature will include methods in which designers can improve these communities through existing or future projects.

#### 2.1 Evolution and Expansion of the City

The city of Dallas evolved through many obstacles and successes. In 1845, Anglo settlers declared independence which became known as Texas and with the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in 1870 led to stimulation in commercial growth (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). The discovery of oil in 1923 was a significant boost to the economy, and its subsequent uncovering led to the development of a strong business and transportation infrastructure (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018) which harvested the growth of finance, technology, and tax revenue.

Apart from the industry change, George Kessler shaped Dallas into the city it is known today. At the age of sixteen, he began his studies in civic design and gained his

education in Germany, France, and Russia, which heavily influenced his design process of urban planning (Anderson 2019). While Kessler was in Europe, the population of Dallas increased which led to urban development issues such as incoherent street patterns, flooding, hazardous railroad crossings, insufficient public transportation, and absence of public space (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). In 1908, the Trinity River flooded and shattered the luminous and prosperous land, the surrounding economy, and population in West Dallas (Simek 2018). However, Dallas City officials recognized the need for preventative urban planning. These city officials instantly hired Kessler to design flooding prevention and implemented a lasting development plan for Dallas. This plan became known as “A City Plan for Dallas”, or the Kessler Plan, which included a variety of civic refinements to discourse the growing issues (Simek 2018).

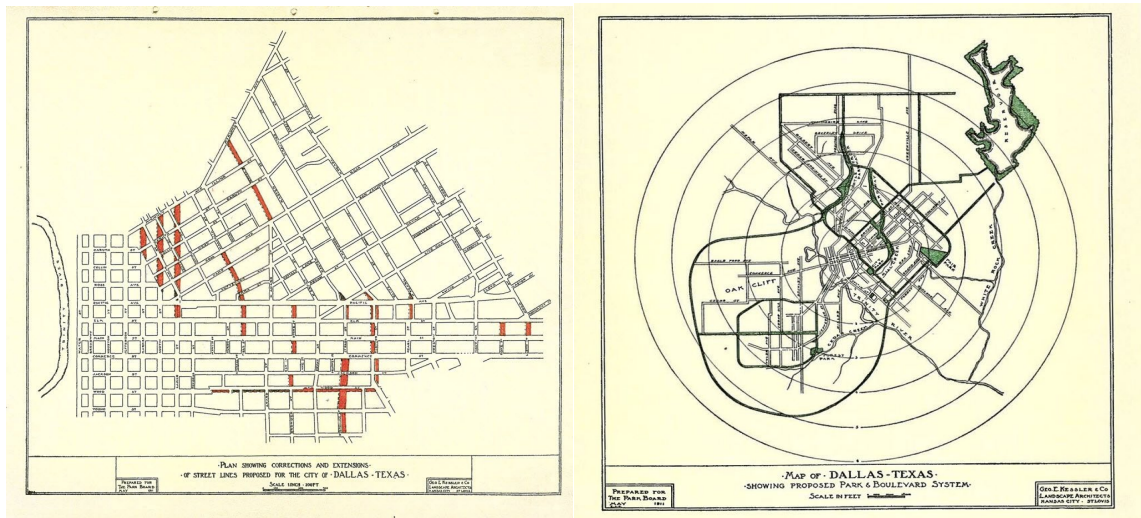


Figure 2.1 (left) Kessler Proposed Street Extension Plan in 1911 and Figure 2.2 (right) Kessler Proposed Park and Boulevard Plan 1911. Diagrams retrieved by Brettell from City of Dallas’ Municipal Archives

Kessler's views symbolized a new hope for the relationship between the people, nature, and the city of Dallas. Nevertheless, the plan did not formally persuade Dallas officials since they considered the idea to exist as extravagant and impractical (Simek



2018). When the plan was released to the public, the population had already increased by 72% (Anderson 2019). Therefore, it was crucial to execute the plan to enhance the quality of life in Dallas as more people settled.

## 2.2 Deficiency of Urban Planning

As other cities across the United States began to expand and evolve, urban planners and designers started to focus on the circulation and imprint of cities to nourish a sense of community, integration, and adaptation to any circumstances (Simek 2018). For instance, Paris inspired Washington D.C. to reinvent urban forms (Simek 2018). One notable example is the creation of wide avenues and public spaces, such as the National Mall, which was modeled after the Champs-Élysées in Paris. The city also adopted a Beaux-Arts architectural style, with grand buildings and monuments, in emulation of Parisian design. (Simek 2018). Soon, the innovation and expansion of cars transformed the blueprint of cities across the nation. The need to accommodate vehicle traffic led to the expansion and construction of roads and highways, while the increase in car ownership resulted in the creation of more parking spaces (Simek 2018). This shift in transportation also influenced urban planning, with the construction of suburbs and the decentralization of urban centers to accommodate the commuting needs of car owners (Simek 2018). As a result, schools began to adapt the curriculum and methodology of urban planning by changing the circulation and spatial composition of the city (Simek 2018).



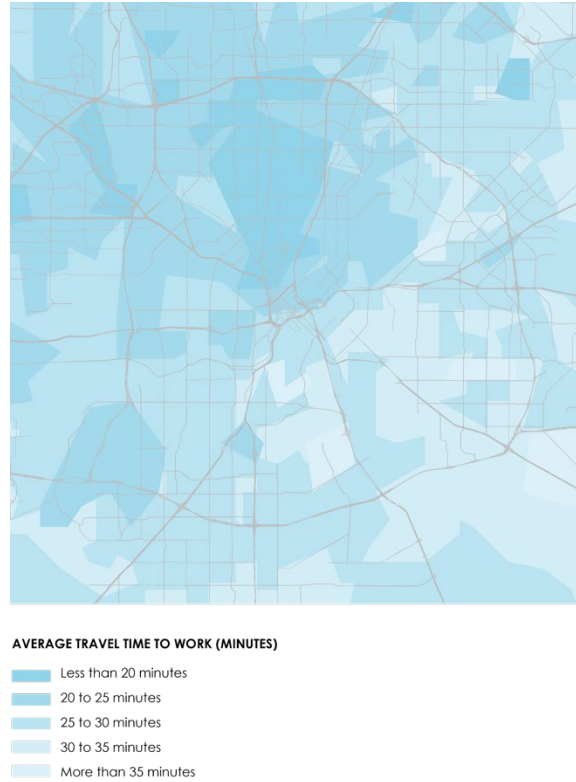
Figure 2.3 Central Expressway Project. Retrieved by Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Kessler's plan was ambitious and innovative, with a strong focus on creating green spaces and improving transportation infrastructure (Anderson 2019). However, by 1918, only some aspects of the plan were implemented (Anderson 2019). While the city did establish several parks and boulevards, the enthusiasm for urban planning as a solution to the city's problems had waned (Anderson 2019). The city focused on other priorities, such as industrial development and the growth of the oil industry. (Anderson 2019). As time went on, Dallas would invite other urban planners to submit plans to the city that met the needs of the economy rather than the people (Anderson 2019). The city's intention and focus disregarded the principality of ethics of the community. By the 1930s, cities materialized into the utopian vision of a soaring and futuristic highway system that formed a network of interconnected roadways from cities to suburban homes (Simek 2018). As Figure 2.2a shows, the expansion created the new American fantasy of a city (Texas State Library and Archives Commission 2019).

To complete Dallas's dream of suburban life into a reality, public investment contributed their assets towards infrastructure. The demand for revitalization led the city to substitute aging commercial buildings with new skyscrapers, parking lots, and roads. By 2000, the population dramatically increased; however, downtown Dallas became obsolete and emptied as nearby communities plunged into economic anguish (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018).

### *2.2.1 Public Transportation*

With the revitalization of the urban development, Dallas has become an automobile-dependent city. While prominent cities across the world have an effective public transportation system and prioritize ridership, Dallas lacks both elements. The city currently has Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), which holds the most extensive light rail system in the United States (Seeley 2022). Nevertheless, it remains an inefficient transportation service that prevents Dallas from evolving into a multi-modal city.



2.4 Average Time to Work (Minutes) Diagram created by author. Information retrieved by Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter

As the fourth city in the nation with the most inadequate place for housing, it also fails to provide equitable accessibility in transportation (Seeley 2022). Research shows that in a typical one-way commute to work in the Dallas area, Hispanic residents travel an average of 28.49 minutes, for Black residents it is an average of 27.88 minutes, Asian residents take an average of 26.44 minutes, and White residents take an average of 24.90 minutes for their commute (Dallas Equity Indicators 2019). Additionally, lower-income residents encounter 30% more stress and cost for transportation (Seeley 2022). Longer commutes often incur higher costs from gas purchases, car maintenance, and public transportation fees.

Jarrett Walker, an acclaimed transit consultant, revealed how influential and improved transportation can directly impact North Texas residents (Macon 2021). By

utilizing the new bus system, the typical North Texas resident can access over 30,000 additional jobs within an hour of transportation, resulting in a 28 percent increase in accessibility (Macon 2021). Therefore, improving accessibility to transportation forms equal benefits for everyone and creates a connection to the north and south of Dallas.

Evidently, the major issue of the city's transportation system is the design of the routes as the absence of a cohesive public transportation system constructed an inequality of accessibility (Hong 2019). This directly causes a scarcity of bringing diverse cultures into contact with one another. Even if people only walk past each other, it constitutes the gesture of an integrated city. An exemplary example of an integrated city is the neighboring city of Fort Worth (Hong 2019). The city prioritized the infrastructure of public transportation, which rejuvenated the usage of public spaces. At first, the public square of downtown Fort Worth served as a remote parking lot but after redeveloping the square, it became a valuable space for the community (Hong 2019). The space included restaurants to eat, kiosks for information, greenery, and a fountain for sustainability and attraction (Hong 2019). Public transportation became the catalyst of its accomplishment as the square includes a waiting area for the bus route. By shifting the focus from success in industry and technology to the needs of the people, communities will feel heard and can contribute to the essence of Dallas's inclusive culture, ultimately leading to a more prosperous and fulfilling future for all residents.

### *2.2.2 Pedestrian Infrastructure*

Every street across Dallas revolves around the circulation of a vehicle rather than a pedestrian (Seeley 2022). Many low-income and Black households have the lowest number

of vehicles available per person (Seeley 2022). With its continuation of promotions for growth, many minorities face inequality (Seeley 2022).

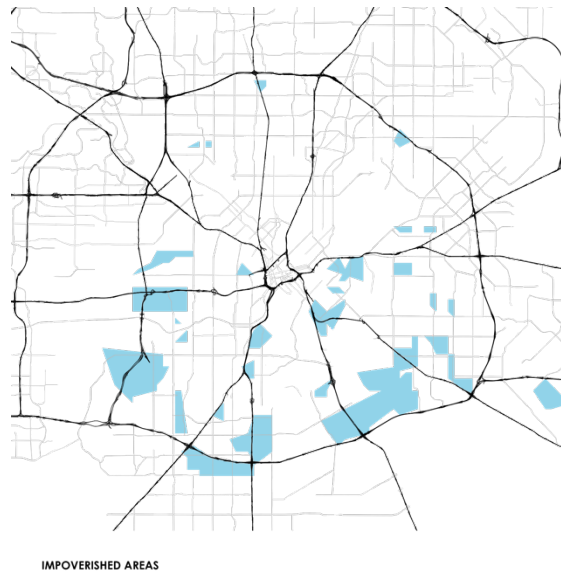


Figure 2.5 Impoverished Areas Diagram created by author. Information retrieved by Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter

Impoverished neighborhoods in the city of Dallas exist in street infrastructure deserts up to 3.5 times more than affluent residential areas (Seeley 2022). Figure 2.2.2 illustrates how lower income areas are located in the south part of Dallas (Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter 2018). More specifically, a substantial percentage of infrastructure deserts stand in the southern portion of Interstate-30 (Seeley 2022). For instance, the North Central Texas Council of Governments has introduced billions of federal funding to extend highways and roads instead of prioritizing the improvements of public spaces and homes (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). For example, civil engineering researchers at Southern Methodist University (SMU) conducted a study of 62 neighborhoods in Dallas where they evaluated the relationship and effect between infrastructure deficiency, household income, and ethnicity (Seeley 2022). The researchers discovered that areas qualifying as infrastructure deserts are home to mainly low-income, Black, and Hispanics

residents (Seeley 2022). Therefore, the lack of focus on the necessities of individuals has led to a dissociation of a community, equal opportunity, and security.

A way to obtain a harmonious and heterogeneous community is by designing accessible public spaces for everyone. An impactful project in downtown of San Francisco known as Market Street became the main artery of the city and a communal place for both residents and visitors (Rogers 2020). After the COVID-19 pandemic, residents emphasized the need of walkable public spaces (Rogers 2020). As a result, the city made changes to residential streets to make them more pedestrian-friendly and car-free, particularly within predominately minority and lower-income residential areas (Rogers 2020). The goal of city apart from becoming sustainable is to improve social cohesion. This project has led to 500,000 people walking on Market Street every day, 200 buses arriving per hour, 650 people per hour riding their bikes, and 75,000 daily transit riders (Rogers 2020). The new design strives to produce a comfortable, accessible, sustainable, and delightful experience for everyone to visit shops, restaurants, nearby neighborhoods, and local attractions.

In all, accessibility to public places not only institutes a robust community but nourishes the fundamental needs to survive according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Baches 2016). Accessible public places like parks play a crucial role in human well-being by providing opportunities for exercise, promoting safety for children, offering social interaction, community events, and enhancing self-esteem and self-actualization through various activities such as sports and arts (Baches, 2016). As a result, the absence of pedestrian infrastructure has caused Dallas to reduce opportunities for social engagement and community building.

### *2.2.3 Parks and Recreation*

Since 1876, Dallas has developed a legacy of creating and designing parks and recreation. As a result of the mobilization of donors and community voices, the city now boasts 400 parks totaling approximately 21,000 (WRT 2016). The Dallas Park and Recreation Department strives to transform Dallas into a diverse and engaged community through their localized efforts (WRT 2016).

Parks can bring a variety of opportunities for recreational events, walkability, and sense of community. Public amenities and spaces have a significant impact on the city by attracting people and contributing to the economy. The City of Dallas received \$638 million from parks and \$300 million from tourist assets which include the Dallas Zoo, Dallas Arboretum, and the Texas State Fair Park (HR&A Advisors 2016). In Dallas, a significant proportion of residents, approximately 75%, express support for increasing fees or taxes to fund recreational facilities and parks, indicating a strong demand for such public amenities. (WRT 2016).



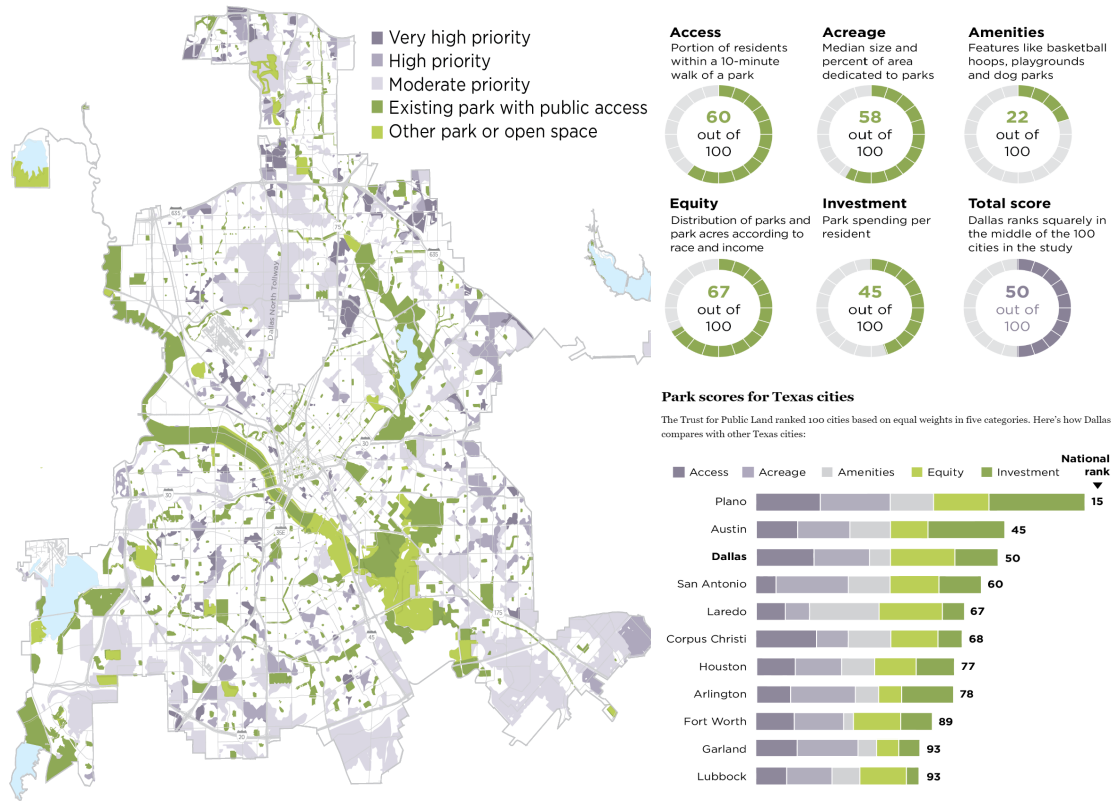


Figure 2.6 Parks in Dallas Infographic. Retrieved by Hogue from The Trust for Public Land

Despite the prominent success of many public spaces and recreational events in the city, there remains a necessity for parks and accessibility across Dallas; moreover, Dallas City Hall Plaza has no commerce and many vacant parking lots, taking away the opportunity for engagement (Hong 2019). According to the Trust research group, merely 58% of Dallas residents can walk 10 minutes to the park, marking the city below the national average (Wilonsky 2019). Additionally, the equity distribution for parks is 67 out of 100, as there exists a high priority need in parks and public access in Dallas (Hogue 2021).

The city has a variety of assets that can contribute to the expansion and remodification of public spaces. For instance, a majority people over the age of 60 live in North Dallas, Northwood Hills, Preston Hollow, and Highland Hills; so, there is an

immediate need for senior-oriented programming (WRT 2016). There also exists a high median income in the northern section of the city, where funding can be reallocated from property taxes. Around the east side of White Rock Lake, expansions of parks can increase the revenues of in low-income neighborhoods (WRT 2016). Revenues include increased tourism and spending at local businesses, higher property values leading to more property tax revenue, and new job opportunities in park-related fields (WRT 2016). Fair Park can also increase economic and social opportunities if utilized throughout the year for other potential events (Hong 2019). Fair Park currently encompasses 277 acres of which 200 acres are concrete slabs for parking.

Civic leaders, designers, and planners can shape the park systems to mark green spaces, cultural sites, and landmarks. Parks serve the needs of the people to rehabilitate resources, integrate new structures, restore native habitats, and maintain the history and the community's identity. Therefore, many of the needed park improvements are refined by seeking citizen input as residents know the needs and wants of the community. Unfortunately, designers often ignore the voices of the community, leading to the vacant public space (Hong 2019). Another common issue is barriers which cause inaccessibility to access the parks. These barriers include lack of security, pedestrian infrastructure, public restrooms, transportation connections, and spaces that provide shade. The absence of public space can lead to vacant, unmaintained areas that are vulnerable to demolition.

### 2.3 Population and Demographics

By 1890, Dallas became the largest city in Texas with 38,000 people and since then, the population of Dallas has increased exponentially (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Dallas is almost overflowing with approximately 1.2 million residents, and it is comprised

of 530,277 Latino residents, 373,197 White residents, 310,099 Black residents, and 41,273 Asian residents (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Even though Dallas's population has rapidly grown, the cultural diversity has not grown evenly. According to the Pew Research Center's 2015 report, Dallas has been deemed one of the most segregated cities in the United States (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018).

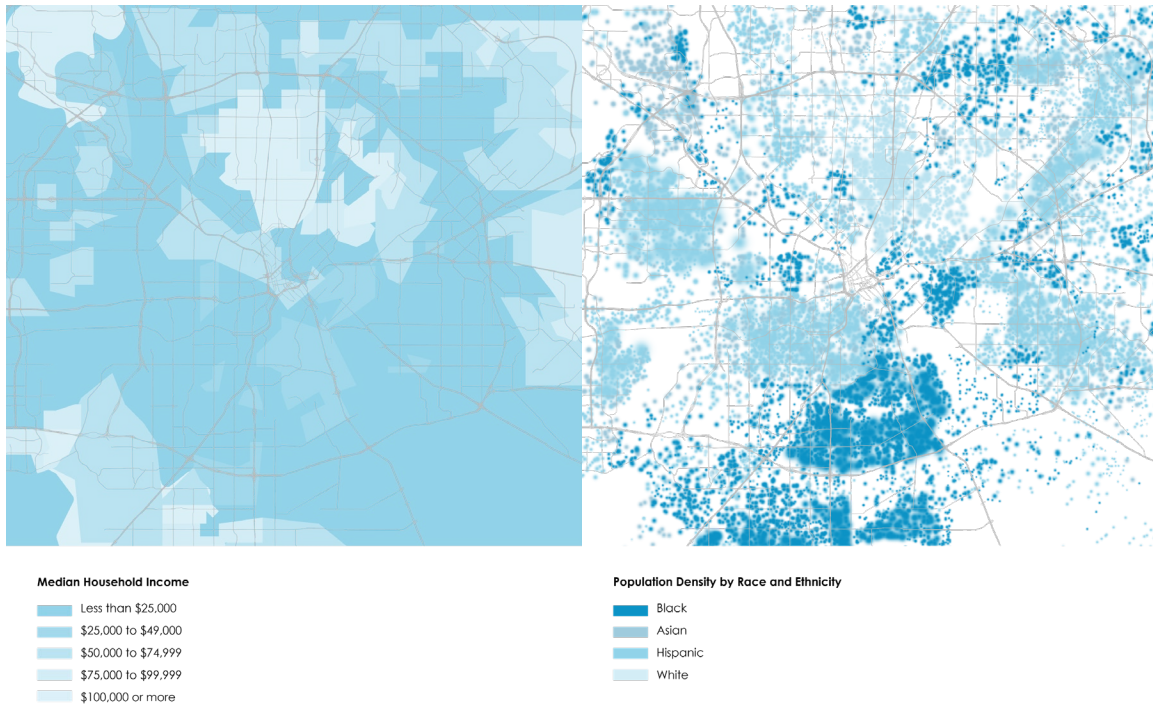


Figure 2.7 (left) Median Household Income Diagram and Figure 2.8 (right) Population Density by Race and Ethnicity Diagram. Diagram created by the author. Information retrieved by Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter from United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Being a majority-minority city, the economic disparities are evident between ethnic groups in Dallas. For instance, more than half of the Black and Latino population experiences liquid asset poverty, meaning a household lacks enough cash or savings to cover essential expenses for three months in case of a financial emergency or loss of income (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). The homeownership rate across all ethnic groups in Dallas is significantly lower than the state and national average and the

homeownership rate for people of color are exponentially lower. As of 2018, Black residents experience a homeownership rate of 28.5%, while Asian residents are 33.6%, and Latino residents are at 41.4% while White residents have a much higher rate at 53.2% (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). White households earn a median income of about \$100,000 more than Black households, whose median income is \$30,985 lower than the national median income. Therefore, 3 out of 5 Black households live in liquid asset poverty compared to 1 out of 5 White households (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Even with economic mobility, Black people still face economic insecurity; and from 1980 to 2016, the Black earning median is \$10,000 below the 1980 median income (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). According to a 2014 study, the National Bureau of Economic Research ranked Dallas as the 27th largest city in the United States according to intergenerational mobility (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018).

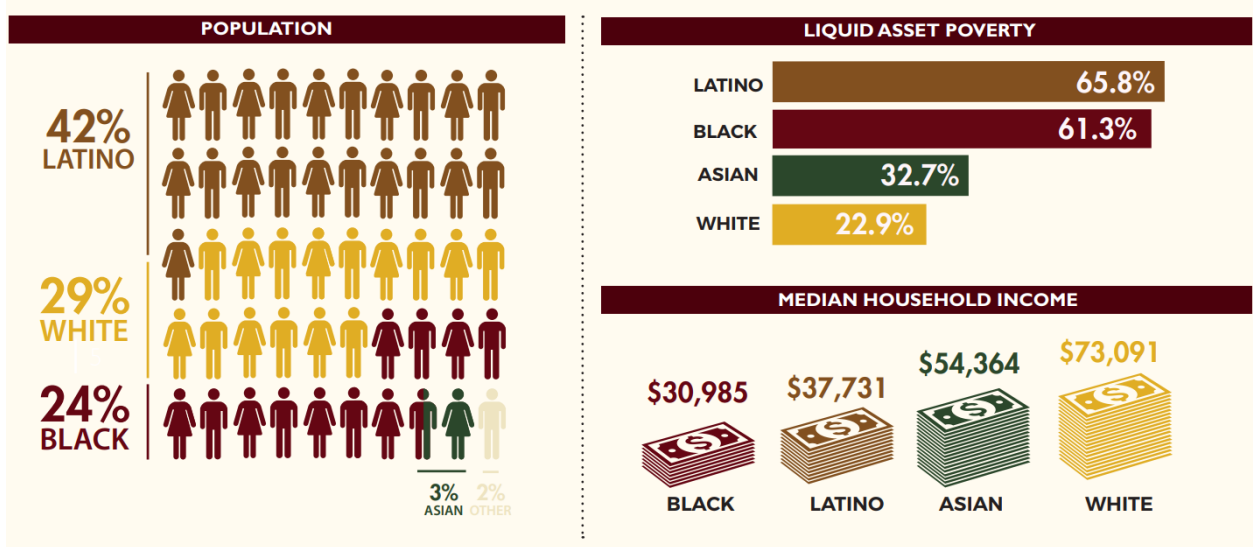


Figure 2.9 Demographic Infographic. Retrieved by Singh & Asante-Muhammad from Prosperity Now

In 2016, Latinos became the largest ethnic group in Dallas; however, out of 500,000 Latinos, only 145,106 are homeowners (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Exacerbating these disparities are home values and housing costs. While White homeowners in Dallas

are faring better than their counterparts at the county, state, and national levels, people of color's property values are significantly lower. The median property values for White and Asian homeowners are \$295,000 (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Despite higher median property values, White and Asian residents are less likely to be cost-burdened, meaning they are less likely to spend 30% or more of their household income on housing costs (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). On the other hand, the median property for Latinos is \$90,000, with 42.2% of homeowners being cost-burdened (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Although 38% of Black homeowners are cost-burdened, their median property value is only \$85,000 (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018).

In a 2015 report by Urban Institute, Dallas remains the highest level of inequality within neighborhoods where it is compared to homogenous socioeconomic groups (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). Compared to the lower income areas of the city, the wealthiest zones acquire six times more lavish income and home values (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018). On the other hand, 80% of lower income households are nonwhite. According to the Pew Research Center, research over a five-year period discovered how the poverty rate rose from 18% to 24% due to inadequate public services and systemic inequality (Singh & Asante-Muhammad 2018).

The flooding of the Trinity River in 1908 caused a tremendous need for housing, and settlement surfaced over the decades. Many housings increased rent, causing inaccessible housing for lower- or middle-income families. Although neighborhoods of different income levels are located relatively close to each other across Dallas, the perspective and identity of their communities' daily lives are vastly different. Notably, low-income residents located south of the Trinity River live in low-cost housing and experience

poverty (Simek 2018). Mark Lamster, an architect critic, labeled Dallas as the paradox city of the U.S.A because of its celebrated notion of success even though there is unaccountability and awareness of the political, environmental, social, economic, and cultural issues (Simek 2018).

### *2.3.1 Public Health*

The structure of racism and violence in the United States has sculpted residents' financial risk and social worth. The uttermost extensive and systemized norm in the 20th century comes from a phenomenon known as redlining, which is an attribute of structural racism in urban planning (Graetz & Esposito 2021). With interference from the Homeowners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), redlining became the concept of current and prospective property value in correspondence to the home's location in relation to the racial demographic configuration within a community (Graetz & Esposito 2021). The denotation of "unpleasant" neighborhoods from state-sponsored policy complied with racial segregation by facilitating health hazards and displacement of communities of color, specifically targeting Black neighborhoods (Graetz & Esposito 2021).

Manufacturing companies often purchase land in low-income areas which can lead to toxic effects for residents. The Blue Star Recycling company purchased land to dispose of shingles made of glass fibers; but over time, the trash evolved into what became known as Shingle Mountain due to harboring over 100,000 tons of shingles (Fears & Muyskens 2020). Within the area where Blue Star Recycling purchased this land lived lower-income and Joppa, a freedman community in Dallas who have lived there since the 1860s (Fears & Muyskens 2020). Another example is Dixie Metals Lead Smelter which emitted smelters in West Dallas and Cadillac Heights from 1954 to the 1990s (Schermbek 2017). The city



disregarded how lead contamination penetrated neighborhoods every day for decades. As a result, children living in North Oak Cliff and West Dallas carried between 7 and 10% of lead poisoning (Schermbek 2017).



Figure 2.10 Air Pollution in Relation to Race. Retrieved by Fears & Muyskens from Paul Quinn College

Environmental inequality causes many health conditions for people of color. As of 2014, chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease caused three-fourths of residents' deaths in Dallas (Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter 2018). From the three-fourths of death, Black residents are disproportionately affected by heart disease and stroke

compared to Hispanic and White residents (Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter 2018). They have a mortality rate of over two times higher for heart disease and are 50% more likely to die from a stroke compared to White residents (Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter 2018). It was also reported that more than 15% of the children who resided in South Dallas were found to have lead poisoning in their blood tests (Schermbek 2017). Therefore, Dallas children harbor six times more than the national rate of agonizing lead poisoning (Schermbek 2017). In 2017 research, Latinos and Black children acquired the highest lead levels in their blood in any zip code in the metroplex city (Schermbek 2017).

## 2.4 Case Studies

The absence of engagement and awareness in urban planning and design conveys the constant stereotype of a poor neighborhood existing as hazardous and dangerous. Designers and architects must think critically beyond the primary objectives of designing and redirect their focus to the essence of the neighborhood. Creating an assertion of developing influential public spaces in low-income communities can combat social inequality. As of now, there remains influential and engaging designs of public spaces across the metroplex and nation that improved the quality and experience for communities.

### *2.4.1 Klyde Warren Park*

One example of how public space positively changed the area is Klyde Warren Park, which divides Uptown Dallas and the Art District. From the origin of an 8-lane Woodall Rogers freeway, the creation of a 5.2-acre park has converted Dallas into an innovative landmark for public spaces (Ozdil, Modi, & Stewart 2013). Through a mixture of federal, city, state, and private funds, it has interconnected the physical, social, and cultural districts into the heart of downtown Dallas.



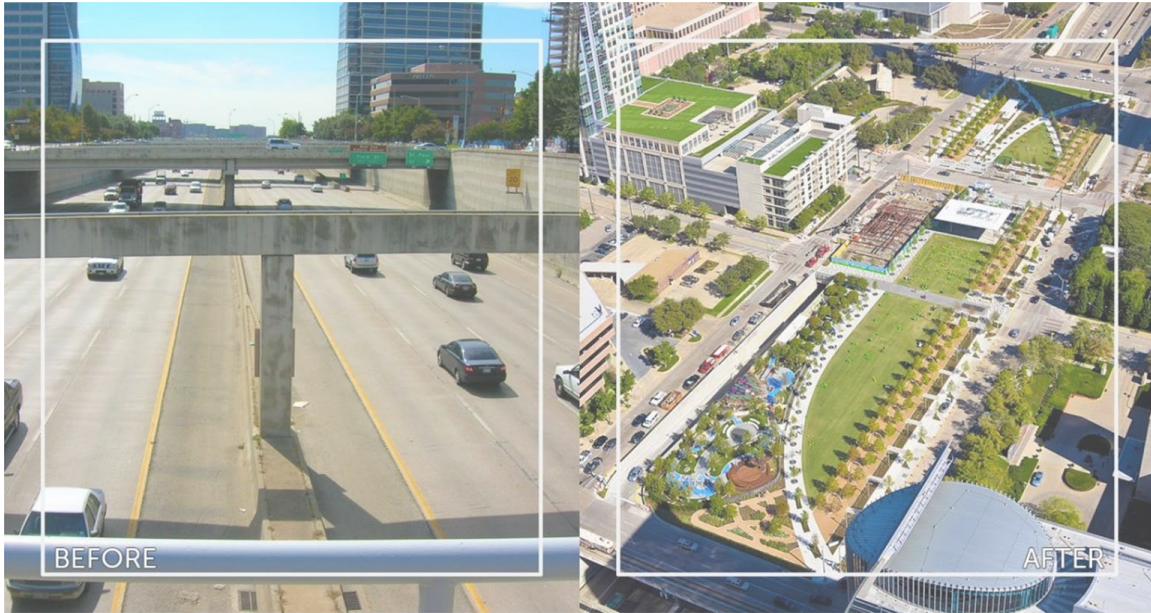


Figure 2.11 Klyde Warren Park Before and After. Retrieved by Ozdil, Modi, & Stewart from The Office of James Burnett

The beginning stages of the park came with many challenges. For instance, the difference between the design and engineering aspects required rigid structural support for massive loads while still wanting to create a nurturing appearance for the users (Ozdil, Modi, & Stewart 2013). The project integrated structure and aesthetics to maneuver an inconceivable assignment of discontinuing infrastructure above an active highway (Ozdil, Modi, & Stewart 2013).

Nonetheless, the challenges brought new opportunities for the park to foster art, recreation, sustainability, public health, and many more programs. One example is the park incorporates yoga classes to relieve stress, stay physically active, build strength, and meet new people (Oden, Simpson, Karl, Shade, & Rictor 2015). The park also stimulated business from food trucks and restaurants for users to sit and eat lunch. Therefore, the encouragement of the park's events and invitations to businesses furnish a prospective economic catalyst and connection to the community.

Because of the diverse programs and events, Klyde Warren Park has attracted different ages including millennials and baby boomers. The park has brought the desire for community identity and safety; therefore, apartment developers have increased projects in the area and generated economic benefits of \$312.7 million, including \$12.7 million in direct tax revenue (USDOT Ladders of Opportunity Every Place Counts Design Challenge Case Study 2015). For such a small scale compared to Chicago Millennium Park which is 24.5 acres and New York City’s Central Park which is 843 acres, it conspicuously exhibits how replacing any concrete and vacant spaces avails an effective and influential pedestrian environment (JACOBS, & Greenock Partners 2015).

#### *2.4.2 Case Studies Across the United States*

Public spaces encourage people to live and congregate together through an attainable, safe, and harmonious atmosphere. Therefore, the vitality of spaces entices people to enjoy urban nature in diverse ways.



Figure 2.12 Gathering Place Before and After. Retrieved from the Gathering Place Tulsa’s Riverfront Park

Along the Arkansas River, Gathering Place forms a 66.5-acre park in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Topo 106 Healing Landscape 2019). The George Kaiser Family Foundation funded the park with diverse programs and natural spaces to deliver inclusive and engaging experiences for all residents to visit, learn, and play (Topo 106 Healing Landscape 2019).

The priority of Michael Van Valkenburg (MVVA) firm was designing inclusivity and accessibility (Topo 106 Healing Landscape 2019). The site includes a sensory garden, the Slide Valley, a water play zone, and two elevated slides (Topo 106 Healing Landscape 2019). It even exhibits 5,800 evergreen and deciduous trees and 16 acres of meadows that attracts around 30,000 people daily (Topo 106 Healing Landscape 2019). To manage drainage water, the park has wetlands where six million gallons pass through (Gathering Place Tulsa's Riverfront Park 2022). The wetlands not only conserve water but purify it with many of the parking lots containing underground filtration basins to remove pollution out (Gathering Place Tulsa's Riverfront Park 2022). Therefore, the park not only invites people of different ages but prioritizes durability, sustainability, and resilience.

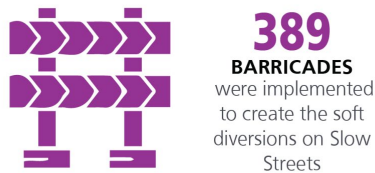


Figure 2.13 Slow Streets. Retrieved by Hake, Liang, & Hoy from Slow Streets Evaluation Summary

Public space, public transportation, civic identity, security, and pedestrian experience must coexist for a successful design and city. Across the country, San Francisco designed and established the Slow Streets program that limits residential streets and

prioritizes pedestrians to uphold the local economy. The program has fundamentally transformed a refreshed car-free community that encourages pedestrians and cyclists to utilize integral services. Between April 2020 and July 2021, the city installed 47 miles of slow streets, 289 barricades, and 30 corridors (Hake, Liang, & Hoy 2021). It has further welcomed a variety of people traveling by foot, biking, wheelchair, scooter, skateboard, and many more. As a result, it has attracted diverse neighborhood demographics: children, elders, those with disabilities, and people of color. According to their study, the program has seen a 36% reduction in car crashes, a 35% reduction in traffic, a 27% growth in biking, and a 65% growth in strolling (Hake, Liang, & Hoy 2021). Looking at the users' experience and perception, 73% of respondents agree that a slow street has created a safer environment and another 69% of respondents agree that they encounter positive experiences in the neighborhood (Hake, Liang, & Hoy 2021). And lastly, 78% of respondents agree with witnessing less car traffic and car speeding (Hake, Liang, & Hoy 2021).



### CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

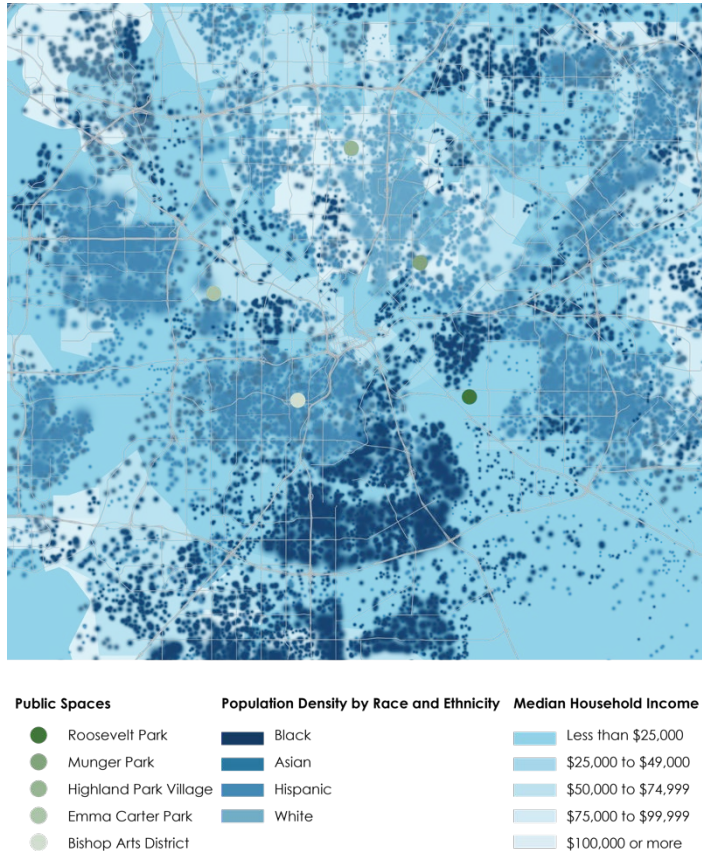


Figure 3.1 Public Places Diagram created by the author. Information retrieved by Groves, Tingle, Haynes, & Perlmeter from United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census

The research begins by experiencing firsthand and documenting many neighborhoods across Dallas through diagrams, photographs, and data collecting. The data includes observations over a period of six weeks of different types of seating, shelters, sidewalks, bus waiting times, route signage, clear curb, parks, green spaces, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) elements in different zip codes. Each visit takes place once a

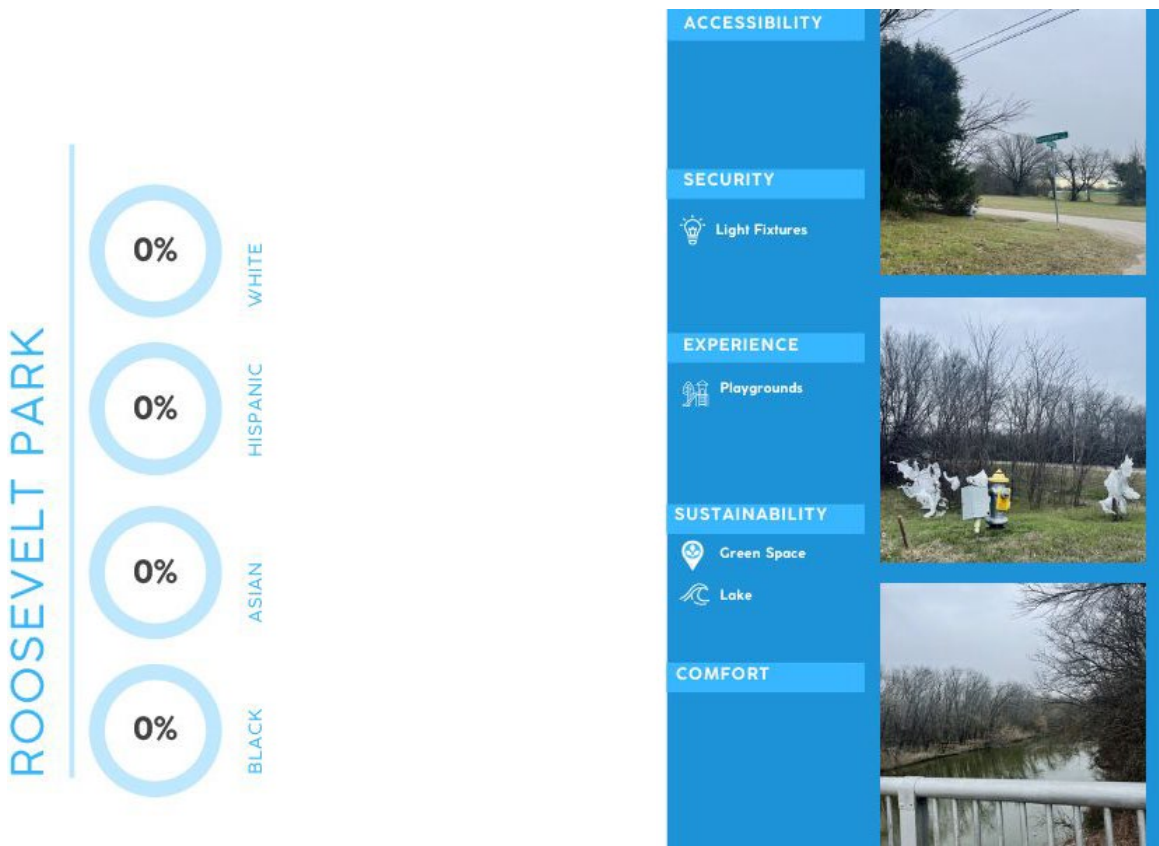
week for one hour at noon. Additionally, the experiment observes and analyzes community interaction by examining demographics. Diagrams in each location include icons and percentages illustrating the quality and demographics. The locations are spread out in Dallas to reveal any discrepancies or similarities between various socioeconomic communities. As shown on Figure 3, the locations are chosen based on the income and race located. The locations include Roosevelt Park, Munger Park, Highland Park Village, Emma Carter Park, and Bishop Arts District.

### 3.1 Data Collecting

The objective of the observation analyzes the relationship between income and the quality of public spaces and amenities. By combining all the literature review, research, and engaging experience on the importance of public amenities and public spaces in lower-income neighborhoods, the observation provides evidence of how public spaces can change the stereotype and negligence of community services low-income and minorities experience on a daily basis. The analysis concludes by rating the quality of the space as excellent, moderate, and poor. The determination of the rating subdivides into categories of accessibility, security, experience, sustainability, and comfort. Accessibility examines elements of ADA, local public transportation, and sidewalks. Security determines any local police, emergency telephones, security camera, and light fixtures. Experience includes many amenities such as playgrounds, restaurants, cafes, recreation events, and programs. Sustainability is based on green spaces, eco-friendly materials, recycle bins, and water management. Comfort is contingent on seating, shading, restrooms, and water fountains. In addition, the data will regard the popularity and race: White, Black, Asian, or Latino.

### 3.2 Results

While visiting each place, I took note of the quality and quantity of each design element, such as the amount and quality of seating available. I analyzed and recorded each public place for nearly one hour each day in the afternoon through written notebook. The percentages of races were one's assumption of their appearance and total average of the



visits.

Figure 3.2 Roosevelt Park Diagram. Created by author

I began in Roosevelt Park, which remains in the South of Dallas near the edge of Pleasant Grove. Based on the literature review, much of the population is low-income Latinx and Black residents. When arriving at the place, there was no direct entrance or signage of the location. The public area was a big green space with zero sidewalks, light

posts, and trash cans. Therefore, trash was everywhere, including the small lake. On the other hand, one of the interesting elements included remote trails within the forest. Moreover, across the street, there was a private golf club course. Despite these amenities,



there were no people in sight.

Figure 3.3 Munger Park Diagram. Created by author

Next, I visited Munger Park, where a combination of low and middle-class homes dwell near the park. The small public space in East Dallas had a playground, seating, trashcan, and shading. Across the street, there were three engaging spots: Munger Square Child Care, Split Coffee Creative, and Garden Cafe. Munger Square Child Care offers recreation programs for children in the community. Inside the area, classrooms have colorful decor according to age group. The cafe presents an outdoor area for hands-on gardening. In addition, Coffee Creative and Garden Cafe offers a variety of cafe food and



drinks for any age group. Therefore, some people were drinking coffee or watching their children play in the playground.



Figure 3.4 Highland Park Village Diagram. Created by author

The next visit was to Highland Park Village. It encompasses luxury shopping and experience in the North of Dallas. From fashion boutiques to seating areas, each part of the public spaces had decorative trees and seating. To enhance the comforting experience, music played outdoors across the public space. Furthermore, a small playground, school, and private golfing club remain across the street. Based on observation, much of the population was White with a few Asian families. People were either shopping, reading, eating, or talking with a friend.

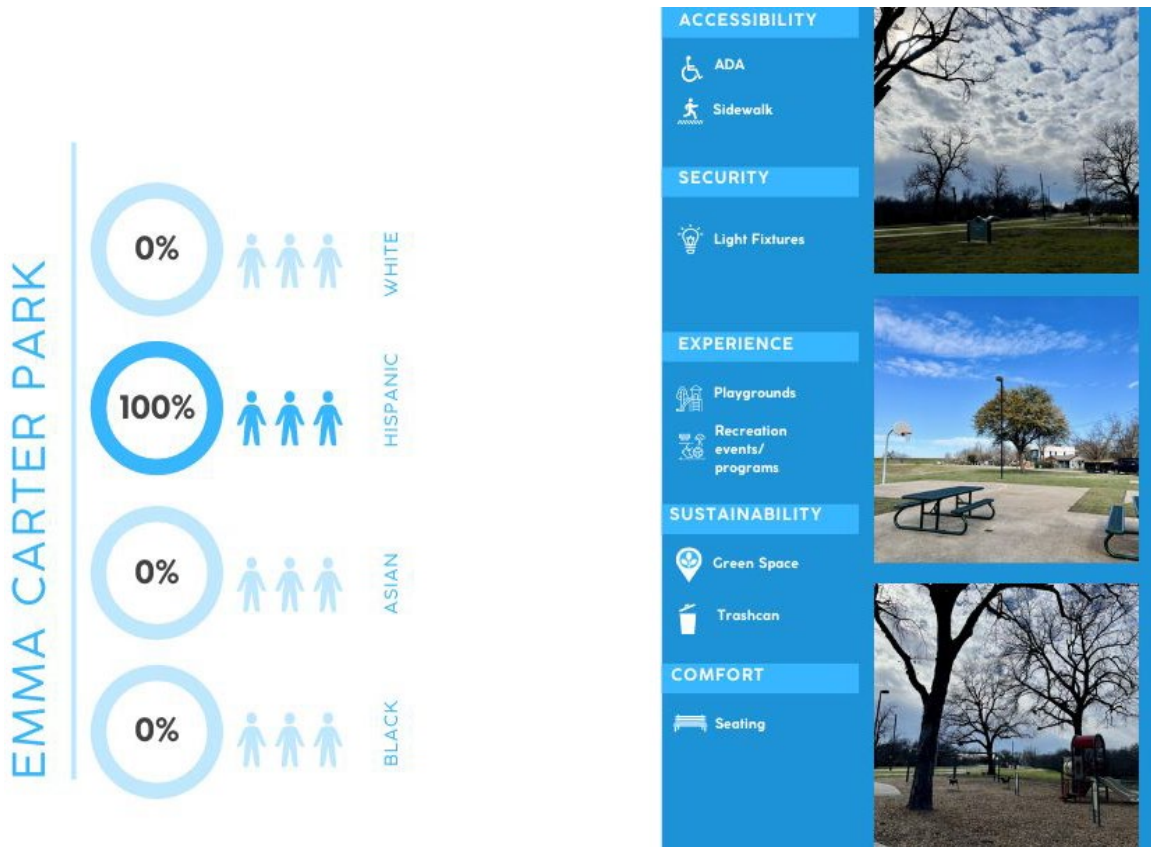
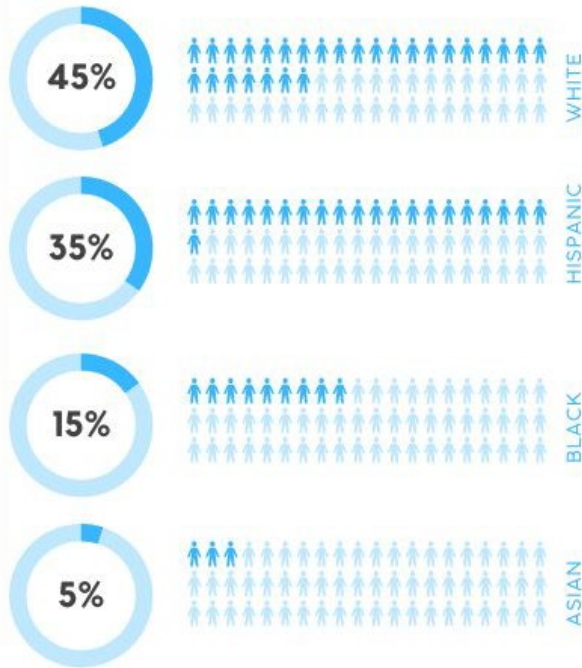


Figure 3.5 Emma Carter Park Diagram. Created by author

My next experience was at Emma Carter Park. Located in West Dallas, the neighborhood public area retains picnic tables, a playground, and a grill station. In addition, it had vast amenities such as a basketball court and pathways to walk dogs. Compared to the previous location, it was simplistic with a wide-open green space. However, there was a lack of shading and a public restroom. Even though many houses encircled the public space, only a family of three utilized the space.

# BISHOP ARTS DISTRICT



<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADA</li> <li>Local Public Transportatio</li> <li>Sidewalk</li> </ul>	
<b>SECURITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SOS</li> <li>Security Camera</li> <li>Light Fixtures</li> <li>Police Officer</li> </ul>	
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playgrounds</li> <li>Restaurants/Cafes</li> <li>Recreation events/programs</li> </ul>	
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Space</li> <li>Recycle bins</li> <li>Trashcan</li> </ul>	
<b>COMFORT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shading</li> <li>Seating</li> <li>Restroom</li> <li>Water Fountain</li> </ul>	

Figure 3.6 Bishop Arts District Diagram. Created by author

My last visit was to Bishop Arts District located in Oak Cliff Texas. It is a public space containing many local artists, shops, restaurants, and seating areas. One of the most notable components is how it is a walkable site with decorative trees, music, and lights. Through the experience, I noticed some couples and families riding their bikes across the area. The community area remained crowded with people from different ages and backgrounds. The food, products, and art come from diverse backgrounds with many influences of pop culture and Latin.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

The data reveals how often income and race determine the success and use of public space. Upper-income residents have more amenities, security, and cleanliness compared to what is locationally available to the lower class. The results show how parks within the median household of \$75,000 and above had more amenities, security, and cleanliness compared to parks within a median household income of \$49,000 and lower. These public spaces are essential to every neighborhood, for it brings healthy relationships within the environment, community, and physical health (Hong 2019). Each public space in the experiment were located throughout Dallas, marking different social classes and ethnic groups to analyze the relationship between both the community and design quality.



Figure 4.1 (left) Roosevelt Park and Figure 4.2 (right) Highland Park Village. Photographed by author

Designing the walkability of public spaces provides a sense of security and comfort. The poorest public space that was visited was Roosevelt Park. Around the area, it consists of a majority of Black and Latino lower-income residents. The space is enclosed as an empty green space with trash everywhere, stop signs on the ground, and no security. Because of this, there is no attraction for people to use the space. Going alone as a woman, I felt unsafe and insecure walking around the area. Without any pathways and signage, the purpose of the space is incoherent and uncomfortable. Alternatively, Highland Park Village remains prevalently used by White upper-class residents. The public place included pathways, seating, and security cameras. Equipped with outdoor cafes and restaurants, people can comfortably sit outside reading a book or enjoying a meal. As I was surrounded by others during my visit, there was no sense of fear or feeling alarmed. Hence, the more people utilize public space, the more people feel safe.



Figure 4.3 Bishop Arts District. Photographed by author

A public place's success derives from representation. For instance, Highland Park Village may be considered the most flourishing in quality; nonetheless, it lacks representation of diversity. The Bishop Arts District's unique opportunities are constructed and inspired by local artists. They exhibit their work through murals, sculptures, paintings, and much more. Many of these artists canvas their art within public spaces for people in the community to admire and respect. In addition, the restaurants have local chefs that cook their authentic cultural food. Therefore, it brings people together from diverse cultures to come and further learn from others.



Figure 4.4 (left) Emma Carter Park and Figure 4e (right) Munger Park. Photographed by author

Most importantly, interactive design is crucial for success. Even though Emma Carter Park has a playground and basketball court, the lack of shading, water fountains, and public restrooms causes fewer people to employ the space in hot or rainy weather. On the other hand, providing direct pathways, shading, and recreational spaces incentivizes people to return perpetually. For example, despite Munger Park's location in the lower and middle-class areas, people are eager to arrive. The public space has a playground,



children's recreational facilities, and cafes. It provides the opportunity for people to socialize and learn more about the people and culture of the community.

In all, the income and demographics of a community should not determine the design of public spaces. It must propose the lens of opportunity, culture, and security. If spaces were designed with the same prospects as the more prestigious communities, there would not be many abandoned areas in lower-income communities. For instance, if Roosevelt Park was redesigned in the same scope as Munger Park's engagement quality and Bishop Arts District's community pride, then more people will visit and feel safe. It has the potential to shift people's perception of the area as the most neglected or troubled part of Dallas. Therefore, altering the entity of public spaces to equity is vital for the metroplex and nation to prosper.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Ultimately public spaces ensure public health, community engagement, and a profitable economy for neighborhoods. Thus, low-income residents across Dallas must retain a flourishing public space to acquire reinvigorated opportunities such as obtaining prominent jobs, education, and physical and mental health. Designers must create spaces that invite diversity for communities to become more inclusive and equitable. According to the Gehl Institute, countless studies have urged how exposure to different races, ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations "increases tolerance and empathy toward others" (Designing Public Spaces 2018). Furthermore, if designers in Dallas plan equitable places, then it will change the current social dynamic and disparities which can lead to residents of low-income communities feeling heard and well-represented. Designers have the power to construct and rewrite the narrative of oppression into opportunity in the city of Dallas and across the world.

#### 5.1 Future Implications

Public spaces transform the lives of low-income residents by providing identity, civic engagement, safety, and diversity. Architects must design with the intent of a timeless and efficient space for communities to expand, prosper, and socialize with each other. In the pursuit of designing for the people's necessities, it can radically create numerous opportunities for Dallas residents.



First, designers must integrate and celebrate the identity of the community through its physical, natural, cultural, and social qualities into the design of a public space. Significant features to attract people come from visibility, invitation, and cultural reference. For example, signage brings branding that reminisces the essence of the community. Public art can function as an architectural component that allows local artists to express the voice of the community. Art engagement can derive from paving, light, murals, signage, landscape, and much more.



Figure 5.1 (left) Zsa Zsa's Unique Boutique and Figure 5.2 (right) Mosaic Makers Collective.

Photographed by author

Next to consider at the beginning of the design process is including community engagement to provide an impactful reflection of community identity. By incorporating creative and expressive design solutions, designers must collaborate and meet with non-profit groups, community members, artists, and public agencies. A way to obtain the community's input is through surveys and by developing early programs that promote education, physical, and fine arts activities.



5.3 Bishop Arts District Leisure. Photographed by author

Designing programs and circulating them amongst the community is critical for the efficacious use of the space. To start, creating an inviting space through pathways, seating, landscapes, or light fixtures defines the transition of different programs. A way to create pathways is through space hierarchy. Examples can be sidewalks, streets, bike routes, courtyards, and plazas. Therefore, it allows for circulation and multipurpose use of the part with different programs in the public space. An individual can take a leisurely walk, read a book, or ride his or her bike. Moreover, ensure surrounding buildings have access to promote human interaction, such as analyzing street grids, pedestrian-oriented spaces, and views from adjacent buildings.

To bring attraction, amenities are substantial attributes to the success of public space. Attractive elements are bike racks, drinking fountains, waterfront, playgrounds, and multi-use courts. Adding movable seating and tables allows users to relocate their seats, which promotes views, comfort, and freedom to choose between conversing in large or

small groups. Facilitating cleanliness is another crucial element of strategically placing trash and recycle bins for accessibility and maintenance. Installing lights stimulates a sense of security for users. Nonetheless, it is vital to consider light fixtures that reduce night sky light pollution for sustainability. Finally, incorporating a native and diverse palette of plants allows for carbon dioxide absorption, noise pollution reduction, and biodiversity.



Figure 5.4 (left) Yoga at Klyde Warren Park and Figure 5.5 (right) Movie Night at Klyde Warren Park.

Photographed by Klyde Warren Park Staff

Above all, including a variety of activities and experiences, will encourage and integrate diverse groups to utilize the space. The open spaces can host events such as festivals, markets, movies, sports, and much more. Having the flexibility of spaces regardless of the weather and season permits users of different ages and backgrounds to come at any time. The activities create the experience of social gatherings, ruminations, and recreation. An example of providing an open space can be a lawn similar to Klyde Warren Park. A big lawn is adaptable to any event, such as meditating on yoga, watching movie night, or playing soccer. Additionally, designers should consider including spaces for informal events such as street vendors, community bulletin boards, cafes, etc. Therefore, it forms the prospect for local businesses and the economy to thrive.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jacqueline Hernandez started her undergraduate degree in 2019 and will graduate from the University of Texas at Arlington in May 2023 with an Honors Bachelor of Science in Architecture along with minors in Environmental and Sustainability Studies, Urban Affairs, and Business Administration. She is a Terry Scholar who will also graduate with Maverick Advantage Distinction and as Summa Cum Laude. Throughout her undergraduate career, she focused on learning and researching equity in design through taking specific courses, including Design Build Studio and Architecture Social Justice Electives. She will continue her education by beginning her master's degree in architecture at the University of Texas at Arlington in the Fall of 2023. Hernandez intends to expand her research in design justice as she continues her educational and licensure journey in architecture.