



TULOA STICKWORK

Project Summary



Above: A group of people enjoying Stickwork at noon on Wednesday, March 28, 2018.
Below: At the same time, two grandparents play with their grandchild at the gusher fountain.
Photos by Krystal Grizzle.



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People

Faculty

Shawn Schaefer AIA, AICP

Graduate Students

Saudamini Inamdar

Daniel Jeffries

Ray Powell

Katie Wing

Robbie Wing

Steering Committee

Teresa Burkett

Ken Busby

JoAnn Caldwell

Nick Doctor

Lucy Dolman

Blake Ewing

Linda Frazier

Krystal Grizzle

Hunt Hawkins

Holbrook Lawson

Leigh Ann Moss

Susan Neal

Kirsten Olds

Michael Patton

Heather Pingry

Stuart Price

Chris Ransdell

Joan Seay

Bob Sober

Scott Swearingen

Teresa Valero



History and Narrative: Chapman Green and UCAP Project

H.A. Chapman Centennial Green is situated in the heart of downtown Tulsa, on land that was intensely developed in the early 1900s. As Tulsa rapidly evolved from a sleepy outpost to a cosmopolitan city, the land now occupied by the Green was transformed from single family homes on large lots to commercial buildings that contained apartments, shopping, restaurants, hotels, and dozens of professional services. Some of Tulsa's most memorable establishments once called this block home, including the Alvin Hotel, Dorothy's, and Mrs. DeHaven's.

In the 1960s, Urban Renewal reached Tulsa and devastated downtown. Block after block, buildings were destroyed to make way for surface parking lots. Only two buildings on the Chapman Green block were spared.

The site remained paved until 2008, when many public and private organizations came together to transform the parking lot into a green space. The timing was unfortunate, though: the Great Recession had just begun, and the City of Tulsa suffered severe budget cuts. The grand ideas for this urban oasis were pared back, and as a result, the park has never reached its potential. A decade later, new life is being breathed into downtown, but this park has still remained mostly unused, unrecognized by area residents and workers, and neglected due to dwindling resources for the Parks Department.

In an effort to bring life to the park, the nonprofit group Urban Core Art Project (UCAP) began working to bring a large, interactive, temporary art installation to the Green. In a grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts, the group highlighted the need for intervention: "If left untouched, Chapman Green will be a dead space in an otherwise forward-moving section of the city." Working together, the OU Urban Design Studio and UCAP formed a steering committee of organizations with an interest in the park's success, and began a placemaking effort that would use the Stickwork art installation by Patrick Dougherty as a catalyst for activating the space, spur community partnerships, and inspire new thinking about urban design, place, and livability in Tulsa.



Even trees (above) and window shutters (below, center) become places for art in the Soulard neighborhood of St. Louis.



OU Urban Design Students interacting with public art at the Laumeier Sculpture Park near St. Louis.



At the City Museum in St. Louis, the art takes on a life of its own.



What is Placemaking? How Does It Relate to Public Art?

Placemaking is a collaborative, multifaceted approach to planning, design, and managing public spaces that capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

The nonprofit Project for Public Spaces notes that placemaking is both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood that can inspire people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces¹.

The Intersection of Placemaking and Public Art

Placemaking is more than just promoting urban design; it facilitates creative patterns of use, paying close attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution¹. Public art intersects placemaking in each of those aspects.

Interactive public art can encourage play, exploration, introspection, and experiencing places in new ways. It can both project an area's existing cultural identities or help shape new identities, and it can bring new people to an area for the first time, and temporary installations and arts-focused programming can keep people coming back for new experiences in a familiar place.



1. Project for Public Spaces. "What is Placemaking?". <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>



OU Urban Design Studio students built a scale model of the park and surrounding buildings to use as a prototyping tool to test ideas.

Top left: Students present findings from the Candy Chang-inspired community engagement boards to the steering committee.

Center left: The Urban Design Studio presents the model and intervention ideas to trustees of the Chapman Trusts.

Top right: students show the model to members of the steering committee.

Bottom left: Some of the interventions proposed include moveable shade structures, using the angle parking on Main Street for the Farmers Market, using stoas to provide cover for market vendors, and temporarily closing Sixth Street.

Field Research and Observations

OU Urban Design Studio graduate students conducted field research and made direct observations of the park before, during, and after the Stickwork installation and interventions to get a better understanding of the effects on the activity levels in the space.

Students observed the park at different times of the day over a week, recording the number of people, their activities, and primary paths and gathering places throughout the park. The students then mapped their findings (left) and presented them to the steering committee.

Students also employed the use of time-lapse videography and audio equipment to capture activity levels and hot spots, and deployed simple survey boards inspired by visual artist and urban researcher Candy Chang at nearby residential and commercial buildings.

Students engaged with the steering committee frequently, leading and documenting monthly meetings with stakeholders who contributed immensely to ideas for potential interventions to improve the park.

Finally, students built a scale model to use as a prototyping tool to test modifications and interventions in the park. The model was an immediate source of attention and exploration for the project partners.





Urban Design Studio students led many monthly steering committee meetings.



Above and Right: Timelapse stills showing activity at the Green after the installation of Stickwork.



Field Research and Observations Findings

Before

Prior to the interventions, most park visitors merely passed through, using the green as a shortcut to a different destination. Office workers in particular crossed the park in the same way each day that they created a goat path from the parking lots south of the park to the Centre Park building on the north side of Sixth Street. The second largest group utilizing the space was nearby residents walking their dogs. Few if any picked up after their dogs, leaving the green littered with dog waste that caused further damage to the lawn.

Unlodged people were the group that spent the most time in the park, mostly staying in shaded areas along the park's southern edge, among the bushes and grove area. Few children were observed before the interventions, and those who were never entered the space beyond the sidewalks at the park's edges. Yoga classes were observed exercising in the same area dominated by dog waste, presumably unaware of the hazards that lay nearby.

Survey respondents indicated a strong desire to rid the park of dog waste, complained about the unlodged people at the park, and wished for more activities like concerts, games, movies, and farmers markets.

During and After

The level and types of activity increased as soon as construction began on Stickwork. During the first weekend of construction, the graduate students hosted a picnic on the green that featured live music and a fresh food vendor, which further increased interest in Stickwork and in the Chapman Green.

People have been drawn to the space, lingering around Stickwork, taking pictures, and socializing. The number of visitors to the park has increased dramatically, and for the first time, children have shown up at the park, playing in and around Stickwork. Students created a Facebook page and an online survey to capture the thoughts of visitors.

Field Research and Observations

Time Lapse Video Analysis

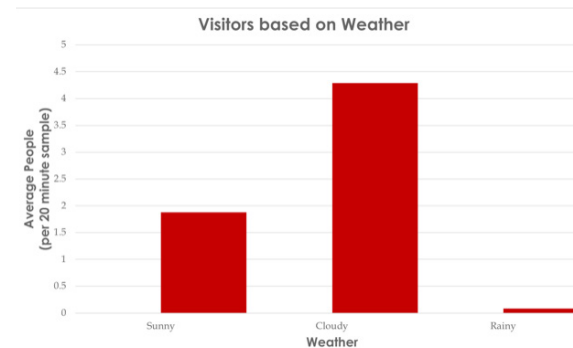
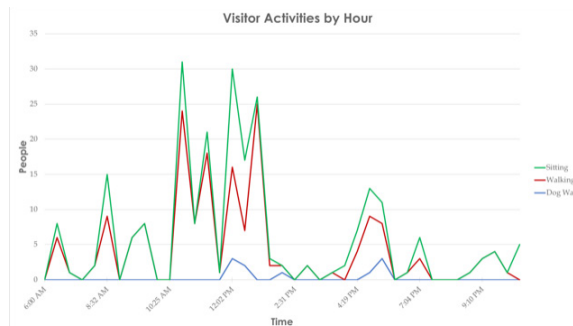
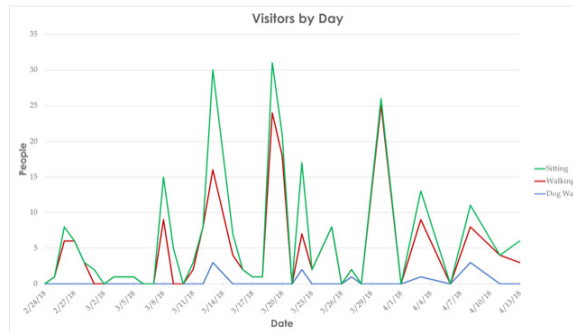
OU Urban Design students utilized a timelapse camera secured to a park-facing balcony on the eighth floor of the Meridia Apartments to record the actions and activity that takes place in the park. The camera took snapshots of the park every thirty seconds between 6:00 a.m. and midnight.

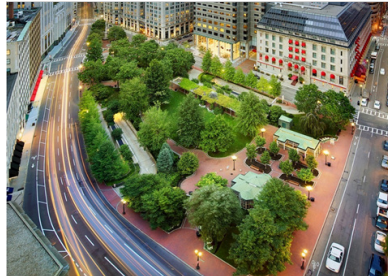
Students began recording February 24 and have continuously gathered data of the park throughout the Stickwork placemaking effort. Students used Excel to generate random times each recording day to analyze the videos, recording the number of visitors, their activities, the group size, and weather conditions.

When shown graphically, it is very easy to understand how the park was used before, during, and after the installation. An analysis of the data shows a slight increase in activity, though the sample size was small. The park has typical peaks of people traveling to and from work at 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., but many utilize the park around lunchtime. Dog walkers follow similar patterns, since it is likely that owners live and work nearby and walk their pet when they can. Visitors typically occur during the week and are often walking or sitting in the park.

Before the Stickwork installation, the park had few visitors, with only one sample having over five visitors. Throughout the installation, many volunteers weaved sticks into the structure to form the art. Upon completion, sample time attendance was often more than ten people. A sample from March 30 counted twenty-six attendants. Though there are few samples reviewed in detail, it is highly likely that the increase in visitors can be directly attributed to Stickwork.

Students also noted that park attendance is higher on cloudy days than sunny days. One potential reason for this is that the lack of shade in the park contributes to discomfort on warm, sunny days, and the clouds provide enough cover for people to feel comfortable outside.





Norman B. Leventhal Park in Boston



Market Square in Pittsburgh
Daniel Jeffries



Bryant Park in New York City
Daniel Jeffries



Lurie Garden, Millennium Park
© Millennium Park Foundation



Klyde Warren Park
Visit Dallas

Case Studies

The urban design students examined similarly sized parks around the country to see what works and what lessons could apply to Chapman Green. Along the way, students discovered that many parks in similar urban settings featured sustainable design, soft revenue generation that paid for maintenance and events, myriad programming, solutions for the dog waste problem, volunteer horticulture groups, and many other amenities.

Areas examined include: Guthrie Green (Tulsa); Norman B. Leventhal Park (Boston); Klyde Warren Park (Dallas); Millennium Park's Lurie Garden (Chicago); Bryant Park (New York City); Third Ward (Milwaukee); and Market Square (Pittsburgh and Knoxville).

Students presented these case studies to the steering committee, and discussions led to ideas and plans for Chapman Green that eventually made their way into a grant proposal for park improvements.



Market Square in Knoxville
Daniel Jeffries



Guthrie Green in Tulsa
Daniel Jeffries



Guthrie Green in Tulsa



Broadway Street in Milwaukee
Daniel Jeffries



Interventions

The Stickwork installation provided many opportunities for placemaking interventions to occur:

Picnic on the Green

On a sunny March Saturday afternoon during the sculpture's construction, the Urban Design Studio teamed up with Mayfest, Tulsa Foundation of Architecture, and Bakeshop, a local Kitchen 66 startup company, to host a public picnic on the Chapman Green. We invited folks through posters around town, and a created a Facebook event to help spread the word. Picnickers enjoyed live music, good food, and got to watch the construction of Stickwork. The picnic was also the final stop for the TFA tours. The event captured a crowd of people that ranged from 8 to 80 years old.

Road Closure

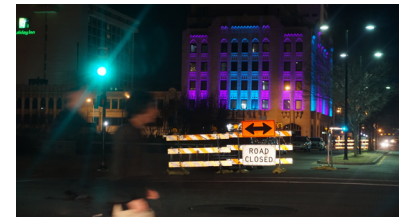
In order to facilitate the experience of building and viewing the Stickwork sculpture, the steering committee decided it would be smart to close Sixth Street between Main Street and Boston Avenue, just north of the Green, during the month of March. Bob Sober of UCAP made contact with the City and a local transportation contractor to make it happen. Overall, it had a positive effect on pedestrian traffic.

A Better Way

UCAP collaborates with the Mental Health Association's project "A Better Way", which provides daily paid work to homeless people. The group cleans the Green every Friday, and has improved the park's appearance dramatically.



Chapman Green Picnic Flyer



6th Street Road Closure



The event was deemed a success by Bakeshop, who sold out of food.



Artist Hayley M. Lee working on a new Stickwork painting. Photo courtesy of Krystal Grizzle.

Stickwork as a Catalyst

The Stickwork installation has proven to be a catalyst for a larger placemaking effort for the Chapman Green. In short order, it has attracted new visitors to the park, and the steering committee convened by UCAP and the OU Urban Design Studio has proposed many future events and activities at the park, and most notably, may lead to seasonal arts programming by Tulsa International Mayfest.

Stickwork has already inspired temporary improvements to the park and has sparked the interest of surrounding property owners who now view the park as an asset.

Multiple artists have been spotted photographing or painting the installations, as well.

In addition to physical changes, Stickwork has already demonstrated that it can be a catalyst for creative thinking about place, urban design, public art, the environment, and sustainability.



An artist finds inspiration in Stickwork. Photo courtesy of Krystal Grizzle.

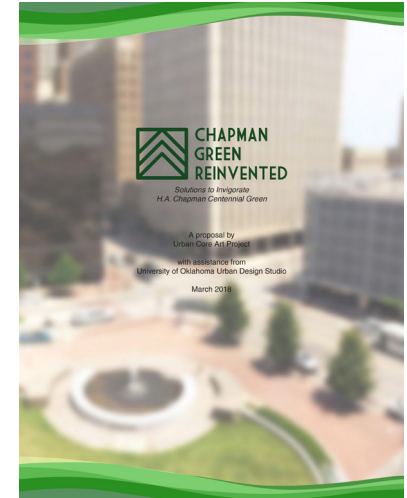
Grant Proposal

Because the original vision of the park was never achieved due to budget cuts, the green remains unfinished, with little usage or activity. Over the past decade, the surrounding area has begun to come to life, with an estimated 800 new housing units within one mile of the park. In recent years, many groups have expressed interest in vitalizing the Chapman Green and creating an active public place for downtown residents and visitors.

With the aid of the steering committee, OU Urban Design Studio students crafted a proposal to the park's namesake funders, the H.A. and Mary K. Chapman Charitable Trust, to initiate several short-term interventions aimed at improving the Green's functionality, state of repair, and activity levels.

Interventions included dog relief stations and pet owner education, the introduction of moveable chairs and tables, an interactive sculpture that will act as a magnet for self-portraits, weekly activity programming by the Mayfest organization, planting new trees in beneficial locations, a shade structure that will allow for real use of the stage and amphitheater for the first time in the park's history, and importantly, better maintenance of the park.

Members of the steering committee presented the proposal to the foundation in late March, and it is anticipated that the Foundation will fund many of the proposed interventions.



Selected pages from the proposal to the Chapman Trusts



Dog Relief Station



Moveable Furniture

The Future of the Park

Key issues surrounding the park were identified through the research and work of the OU Urban Design students, direct observations, monthly committee meetings, placemaking exercises and design charrettes. Issues identified include: the lack of shade, moveable seating, maintenance, and programming; and the proliferation of solid dog waste from the new neighborhood residents.

We proposes several short-term interventions aimed at improving the Green's functionality, state of repair, and activity levels. Among them are dog relief stations and pet owner education, the introduction of moveable chairs and tables, an interactive sculpture that will act as a magnet for self-portraits, weekly activity programming by the Mayfest organization, planting new trees in beneficial locations, a shade structure that will allow for real use of the stage and amphitheater for the first time in the park's history, and importantly, better maintenance of the park.

Dog Relief Station

Dogs have been at the forefront of discussions surrounding the park. When the park was originally constructed, there was almost no nearby housing; today, there are at least 1,200 units downtown and a 97% occupancy rate, with an additional 814 units planned within the next two years. With the influx of new residents has come their pets, and because the Chapman Green is one of only a few green spaces in downtown, it has become a main place for dogs to relieve themselves. These dog owners have yet to familiarize themselves with urban dog etiquette and how to share public spaces responsibly. We propose creating a specific place for pets to go, hoping it will reduce or eliminate pet waste in the remainder of the park, and encourage positive pet owner behaviors.

Moveable Furniture

There is currently very little desirable seating provided in the park. Great urban parks and plazas provide moveable furniture so guests can make the space their own. Currently, the bulky, fixed furniture puts many limitations on visitors: The four attached seats limit any group gathering to a maximum of four people and none of the chairs can be adjusted or grouped as visitors intend. We propose purchasing multiple types of inexpensive moveable chairs, and monitoring how people use them.



"Be the One" 918 Sculpture



Proposed trees near the fountain

"Be the One" 918 Sculpture

Though the park has existed for a decade now, it is still largely unknown. One major contributor to the park's unknown status is a lack of distinguishing features that give it a unique identity. In collaboration with the University of Tulsa's School of Art, we propose a large, interactive sculpture to be placed at the park.

The sculpture will consist of the numerals 9 and 8, with a space in the middle for visitors to insert themselves as "the one". The finished sculpture would stand roughly six feet tall and be made of a shatterproof, mirrored material to reflect its downtown surroundings.

Our hope is that the "Be the One" sculpture will become a magnet for selfies (self portraits) as people post their photos on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, drawing new visitors to the park.

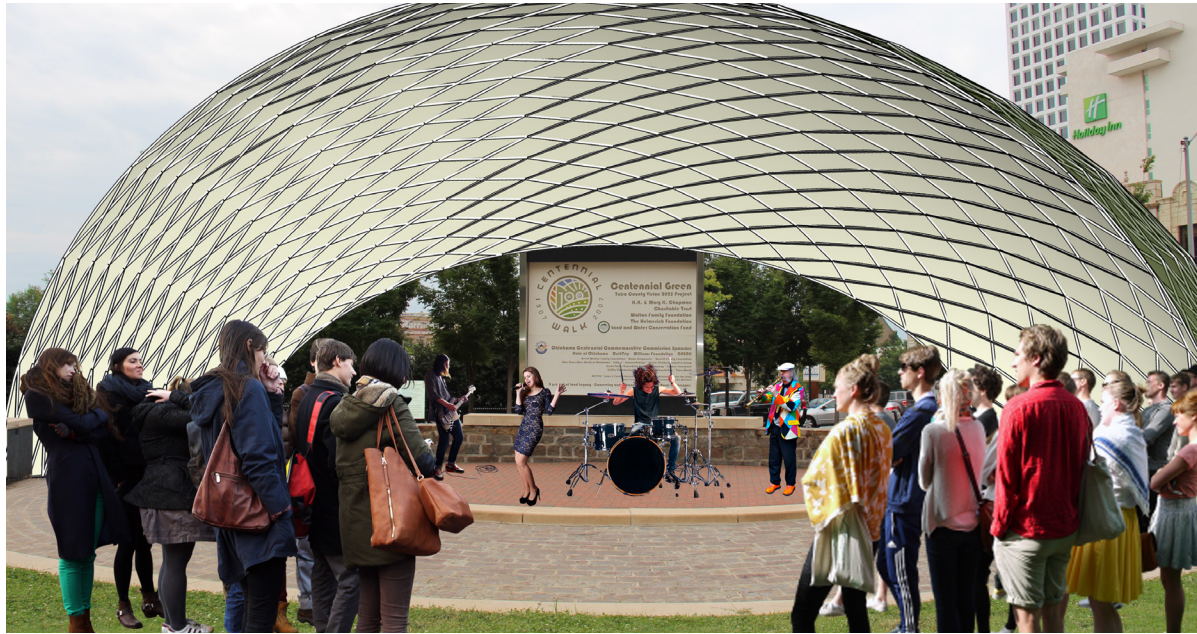
Trees and Shade

In summer months, Tulsa can become unbearably hot, and the heat and the lack of shade discourage visitors from utilizing the open spaces at the Green. Adding shade in strategic locations throughout the park will make the Green more comfortable in our sweltering summers.

One of the many benefits of trees is their seasonal adaptability: they provide shade and coolness when needed in the summer, and then shed their leaves in the fall and winter to provide sunlight and warmth.

In the short term, we recommend groupings of trees in the northeast section of the park, keeping in line with the general concept behind the Parks Department's existing plans. The trees will define the area near the fountain as its own space, provide shade, and create a gateway that leads visitors from the fountain deeper into the Green.

In the long term, additional trees should be planted along the public sidewalks abutting Main and Sixth Streets to make walking to the park more comfortable.



Amphitheater Canopy



Yoga Classes on the green

Amphitheater Canopy

We propose adding a shade canopy to the amphitheater seating area, which would create usable shade in places where people need it, while preserving a great deal of open lawn. The canopy would enhance the experience of attending an event or enjoying lunch on the lawn, and would help better define the space around the amphitheater. Such a canopy could be stationery, or it could be retractable to provide more flexibility. In either case, there should be no poles or obstructions blocking the view of the stage from the lawn seating. Having both shade and an unobstructed view of the stage are key elements to making this venue desirable for concerts, movie nights, plays, and other community events. Temporary structures like tents and umbrellas can help test the idea.

Operations and Programming

Two driving factors behind a successful public space are its operations and programming. Programming draws people to the space, giving visitors a reason to go to the park and use it in a variety of ways, transforming a space multiple times a week or day. Programming is one of the core elements of Tulsa's most successful urban park, Guthrie Green. From movie nights, plays and symphony concerts to yoga, Zumba, and pet-themed events, the operations team has created the liveliest public space in Tulsa.

Chapman Green has the potential to draw in downtown residents and visitors by combining quality programming with the arts. As previously mentioned, Tulsa Mayfest recently moved into the Chamber Building adjacent to Chapman Green. UCAP's focus on temporary art installations aligns with Mayfest's arts mission, and long history of successful event promotion and management makes them a natural fit for programming Chapman Green.

Mayfest has built a proposal for programming the park for 2-3 days a week, which includes movie nights, movement and dance classes, art classes, and music nights. After establishing a successful track record with vendors, Mayfest would implement revenue-generating measures to defray some of the costs associated with managing and promoting the events, and in the long-term, help make the park operations self-sustaining.

Chapman Green's amphitheater and grassy lawn are well-suited for movie nights: the existing stage area could easily accommodate a large movie screen, and there are many other areas within and surrounding the park, including the wall of the Chamber of Commerce Building next door, that could



Movie Nights



Occasional street food vendors on the green



Tulsa Farmers Market on the green

accommodate a screen. Projectors and audio equipment would be fairly quick and easy to set up, and if movable furniture is available, people can use the furniture to sit for a movie or bring a blanket and lay on the lawn. This is a very achievable event that can generate a regular, enjoyable gathering at the park.

In addition, expanding the Tulsa Farmers Market with a new location at the Chapman Green could provide a great service to downtown residents, attract new people to downtown, and could generate revenue and activities around the park.



Proposed site plan for future park interventions, which include space for the farmers market, moveable seating and shade, a bandshell over the amphitheater, new tree plantings to provide shade in the eastern section of the park, the “Be the One” 918 sculpture, and operational bollards to temporarily block Sixth Street during events.

Urban Design Studio
College of Architecture
The University of Oklahoma
4502 East 41st Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135

