

Bethel, Vermont
Better Parks Project Concept Plan
11.10.2022

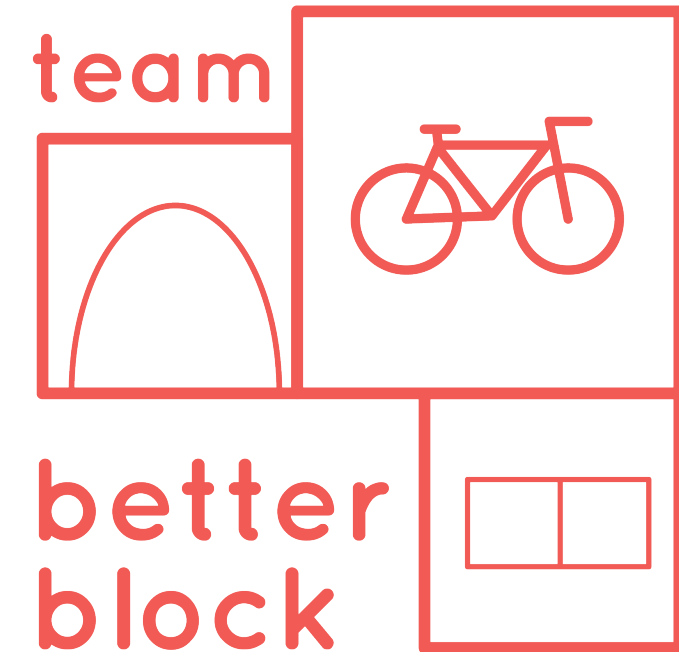
ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In 2016, the Town of Bethel, Vermont teamed up with Team Better Block, AARP Vermont and the Bethel Revitalization Initiative to host Vermont's first Better Block Project. The two-day Main Street demonstration helped to kickstart downtown revitalization and longer-term action and planning projects.

Accessible village parks and outdoor recreation have emerged as key priorities, and Bethel is bringing back Team Better Block and the Better Block model to revitalize and improve parks and trailheads. Bethel will plan a "Better Parks" demonstration in 2023, to test long-term improvements and spark more action.

Bethel has received three major grants to support this work:

- **Bethel for All / Vermont Better Connections Grant (2021-2023).** Bethel for All is a village accessibility planning process that has identified priority parks and public spaces, gathered public input, audited parks and recreation accessibility, and prioritized bike/pedestrian connections. Better Connections is a program of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Natural Resources, and Department of Health.
- **AARP Technical Advisor Program (Feb. 2022).** AARP's national office and AARP Vermont supported a site visit and community planning workshop in May 2022 with Team Better Block and the development of this concept plan.
- **Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economy Collaborative Grant (2022-2024).** Bethel was awarded a VOREC grant to develop a connected, accessible network of village parks and trails. The grant will support the Better Parks demonstration event in 2023 (including a placemaking trailer) along with outdoor rec planning and action projects.



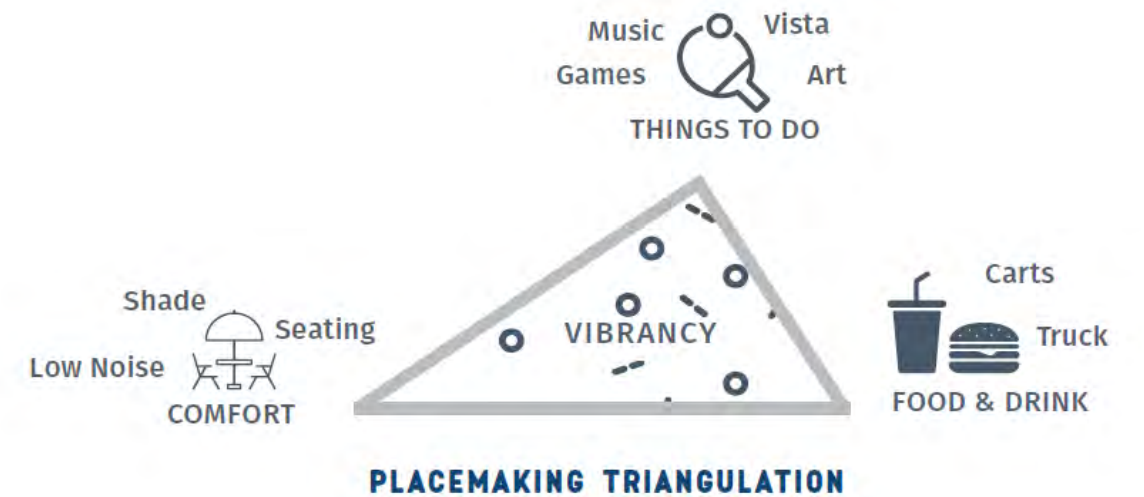
PLACEMAKING AND BETTER PARKS

Outdoor recreation has a host of benefits to people and communities. Access to trails and outdoor spaces can boost physical activity, mental health, social connections, local economies and more.

Parks and trailheads are key portals to trails and open space, and to these many benefits. They can also serve as vibrant gathering places and recreation hubs on their own. The more vibrant, appealing and accessible these places are, the more people will use and enjoy them.

Placemaking is a key strategy for increasing the appeal and accessibility of Bethel's parks, trailheads and outdoor spaces.

By coordinating three core types of placemaking improvements — shown in the adjacent graphic — Bethel can make parks and trailheads more welcoming places to spend time, attract more diverse people and uses. Bethel's Better Parks planning process and demonstration will test how to "triangulate" or connect three types of improvements.



LOCAL PRIORITIES

Recent community development and planning work in Bethel also helped to identify local priorities for successful placemaking and parks improvements:

- **Accessibility and inclusion:** ensuring that diverse people can physically access and enjoy amenities and spaces
- **Practicality:** creating amenities that can reasonably be maintained by volunteers and a small, rural community
- **Flexibility:** improvements that serve multiple spaces, uses, seasons, and groups

BETTER PARKS LOCATIONS & DEMONSTRATION CONCEPT

Bethel's village center is home to more than a dozen parks, public spaces, and trails. Many of these locations already serve as community gathering places or recreation hubs, but could be enhanced with placemaking and improvements. In May 2022, Team Better Block facilitated a site visit and community workshop to tour locations, identify assets and ideas, and develop a demonstration concept and priority sites. Community organizers chose three distinct sites for the 2023 demonstration.



The core concept will be a placemaking kit that can be set up in each location for events and temporary activations.

Bethel Athletic Fields



Recreation Center

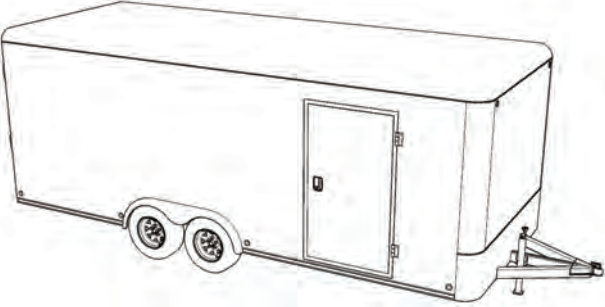
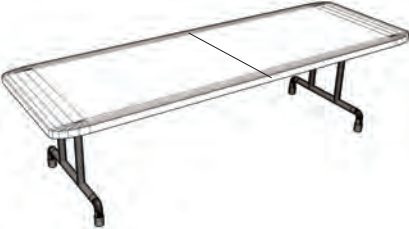

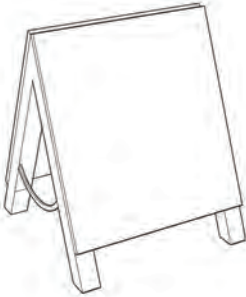
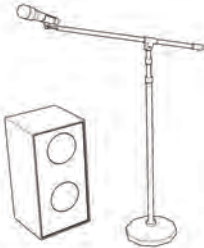


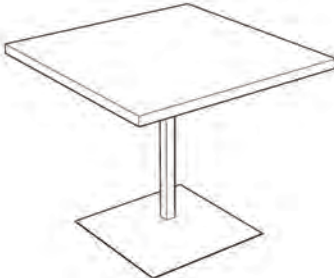
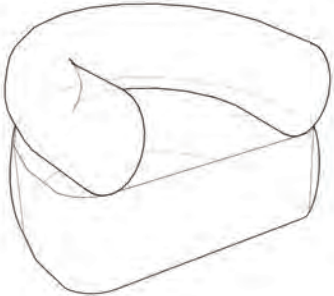
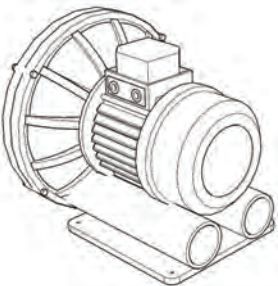

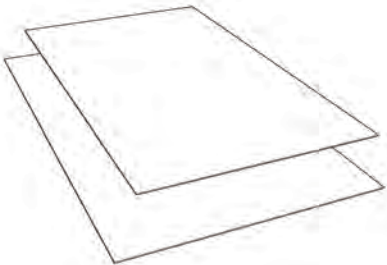
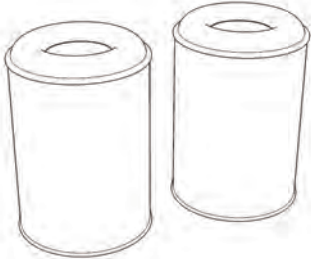
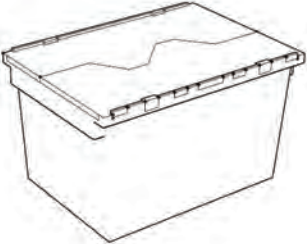
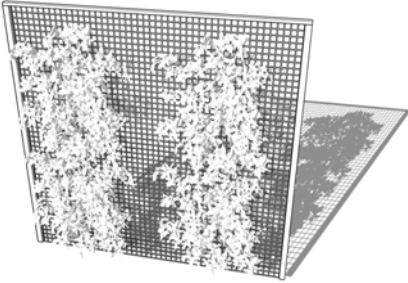
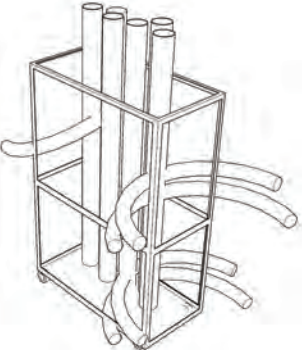
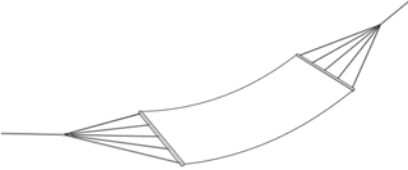
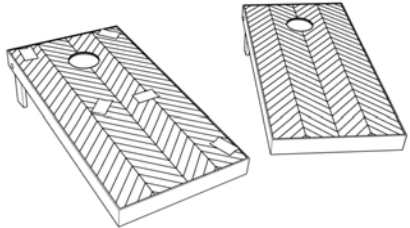
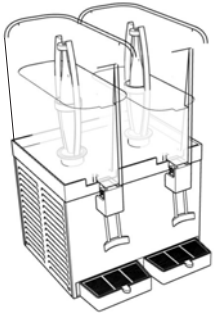
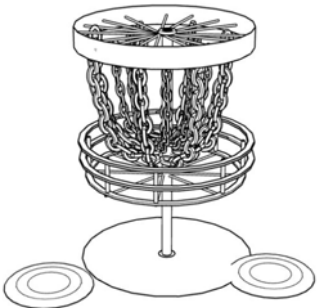
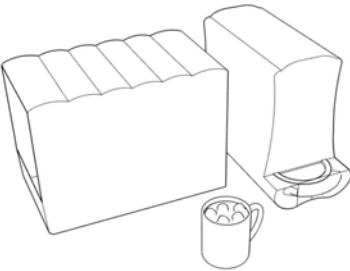
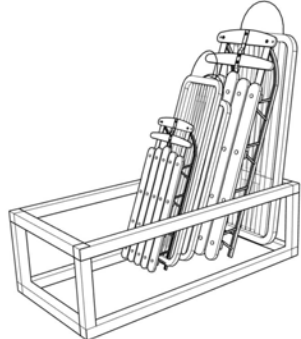

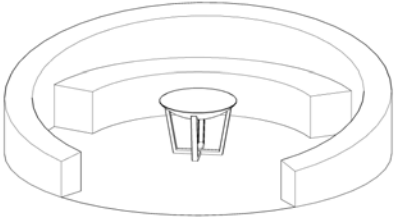



Bandshell Common



PLACE TRAILER: ELEMENTS

The trailer will include flexible, durable equipment to increase comfort, add amenities, attract more people, and make parks and trailheads more accessible to all.

						
Trailer		Folding Table	Pop-up Canopy	Signage (A-frame)	Mic + Speaker	Umbrella
						
Folding Chairs	Cafe Tables	Inflatable Chairs	Air Pump	String Lights	Outdoor Mats	Trash/Recycling Bins
						
Storage Bin(s)	Foldable Screen(s)	Art/play piece	Hammocks	Cornhole	Drink Dispenser	Frisbee Golf
					Bethel groups and leaders developed these preliminary item ideas. They will help finalize a purchase list and shared use agreement in 2023. Between uses, the trailer can be parked at White River Valley School.	
Hot Cocoa Pot	Sled Library	Snowcastle Toys	Firepit	Movie Screen		

EXISTING CONDITIONS: BANDSHELL COMMON

The Bandshell is a beloved warm weather venue for concerts and performances, a weekly farmers' market, a fall harvest festival, and daily use for picnics, dog walks and rest time. It has potential to be a more active gathering place, an all-season space, and rest/info hub for visitors to town.



WHAT'S HERE NOW?

- Bandshell stage with power, ramp and lighting
- Sunken central courtyard with small steps down, center fountain, and brick pad (the border wall is the foundation of a former high school)
- Shade trees, mowed lawn, perennial gardens, little free library, 4-5 benches, small historic plaque, seasonal porta potty and water pump
- Parking and Tri-Valley Transit bus stop; sidewalk access; stone paths

WHAT'S PLANNED? I : 3Fy ;? 39;@761

No improvements currently planned.

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- 363 SUWet[f[k [bchW_ Wfe[UgV[Y` W bSfzi SkeS` V dS_ befa UW fWUagdkSdV and improved parking spots
- Adding recreation amenities such as a path around perimeter, winter skating in center courtyard, and view of the river from the rear of the site
- Ej fWV[Y fZWbSd] fa fZWT dVYWSUbaean abutting fai ` žai ` W bSdJWfi

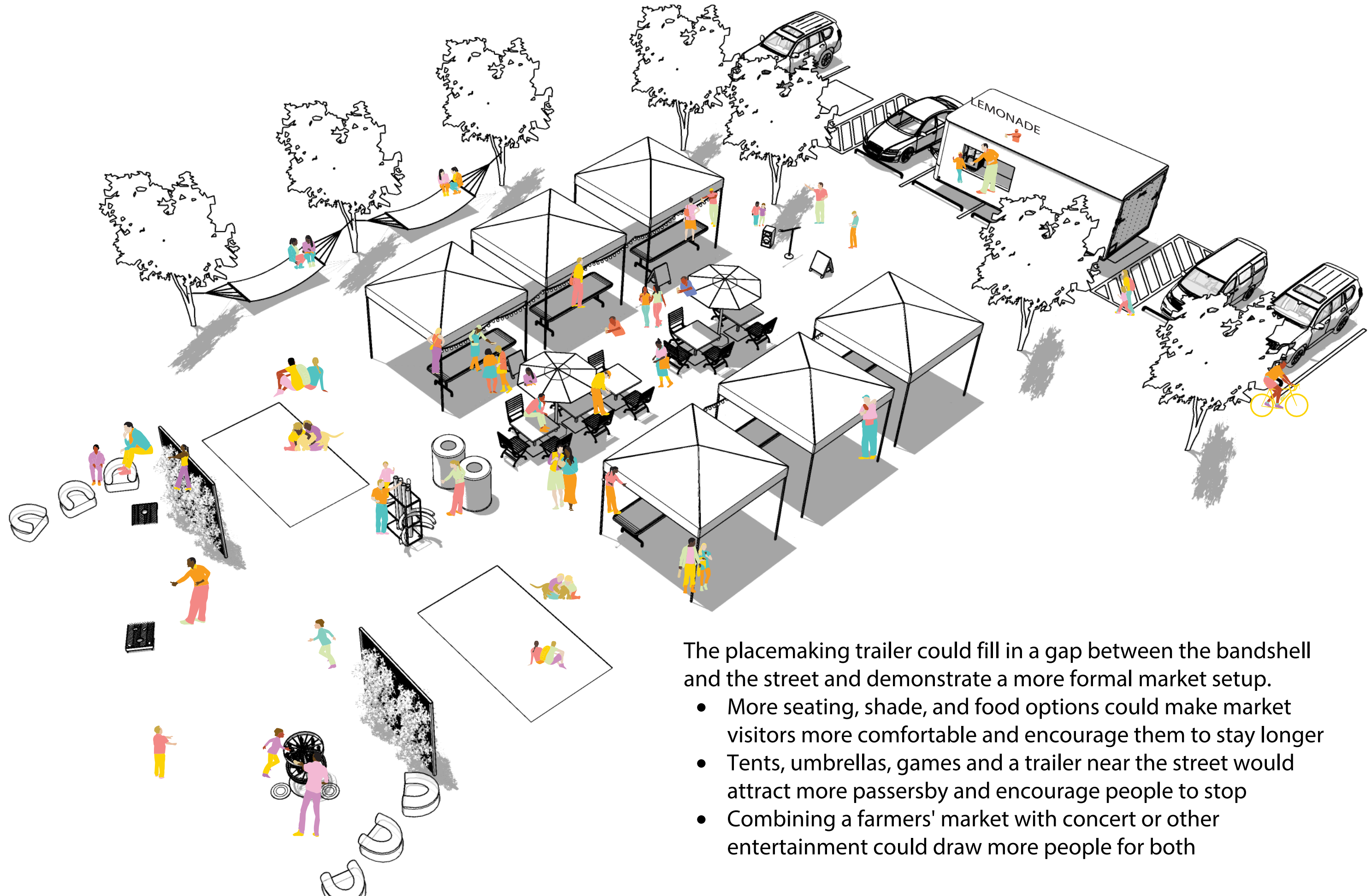
WHAT'S MISSING OR NEEDED?

- Picnic or cafe tables for use anytime; additional seating / movable seating for markets and events
- Games, food offerings and amenities to activate events and draw more users
- Art, historical signs or interpretation, or play equipment to draw
- Winter use or activation; better park lighting for nighttime events
- Kiosk or maps

 BETTER PARKS TRAILER SETUP LOCATION

The setup illustrated on the next page could be accomplished where the red dotted square is highlighted on this map.

PLACE TRAILER: BANDSHELL MARKET ACTIVATION



The placemaking trailer could fill in a gap between the bandshell and the street and demonstrate a more formal market setup.

- More seating, shade, and food options could make market visitors more comfortable and encourage them to stay longer
- Tents, umbrellas, games and a trailer near the street would attract more passersby and encourage people to stop
- Combining a farmers' market with concert or other entertainment could draw more people for both

EXISTING CONDITIONS: RECREATION CENTER

The Recreation Center is a major hub for the community in summer with the pool, skate park, playground, trailhead and garden. In the winter the area is transformed with an ice rink and a hill becomes a haven for people sledding. There's great potential to add more events and activities and to add amenities for comfort and accessibility, which would allow more people of all ages to gather and stay longer.



 BETTER PARKS TRAILER SETUP LOCATION

WHAT'S HERE NOW?

- Zero-entry in-ground pool and bathhouse, open during summer months
- Large timber-frame pavilion with picnic tables, seasonal water/bathrooms
- Small timber-frame pavilion with gravel base, tables, and seasonal ice rink
- Skate and BMX bike park, play structures, community teaching garden, grills, and a few benches
- Dirt parking lot with sidewalk access, accessible parking space, paved path
- Trailhead for Bethel Woods trails and school connector

WHAT'S PLANNED? | : 3Fy ;? 39;@761

Substantial improvements are planned, with many ideas fully or partially funded and slated to move forward in 2023-2024

- Accessibility improvements including paved pathways to skatepark and play structures, accessible swing, portable mats for wheelchair access
- Upgrades and repairs to the pool, including lift installation
- Construction of phase II of the skate park, which will double footprint
- Construction of multi-use 2.5-mile Outer Loop trail
- Sidewalk reconstruction along Pleasant Street (4-year project)

WHAT'S MISSING OR NEEDED?

- Winter amenities for events and activation (seating, fire pits, light, shelter)
- Year-round bathroom and water access; Wifi connection
- Flexible, movable, tables and seating options
- Accessible play and activity options; lending library for outdoor gear
- Trail maps and information; welcoming signage

The setup illustrated on the next page could be accomplished where the red dotted square is highlighted on this map.

PLACE TRAILER: RECREATION CENTER ACTIVATION



Tying activity points together and adding amenities with the placemaking trailer would make it easier for people of all ages to spend more time outdoors and make it easier for community groups to host engaging, fun events -- especially during winter.

- Fire pit, seating, and food vendor options make it more comfortable to stay outdoors and onsite longer
- Sleds, play equipment, outdoor movie screen create activity options for all ages and interests

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ATHLETIC FIELDS

The Athletic Fields become a bustling place when sports games are underway, but the site has potential to be a more flexible and widely used outdoor recreation and education site. More all-season and accessible amenities, activities and bike/pedestrian connections can help.



WHAT'S HERE NOW?

- Multiple baseball, softball, and soccer fields and sports infrastructure
- Seasonal water pumps and porta potties
- Informal access paths to the White River and Carla's Meadow trail
- Snack shack with food offerings during games
- Dirt parking lot and access road

WHAT'S PLANNED? I : 3F€ ;? 39;@761

Substantial trail improvements and longer-term planning are fully funded and slated to move forward in 2023-2024

- Universally accessible walking path around perimeter of fields; signage and connections to fully built Carla's Meadow Trail
- Kiosk for recreation maps and information and community connections
- Long-term planning and exploration of other bike, pedestrian and recreation connections including snowmobile access, formal river access, footpath to Church Street, footbridge to Marsh Meadow, and Pleasant St. connections

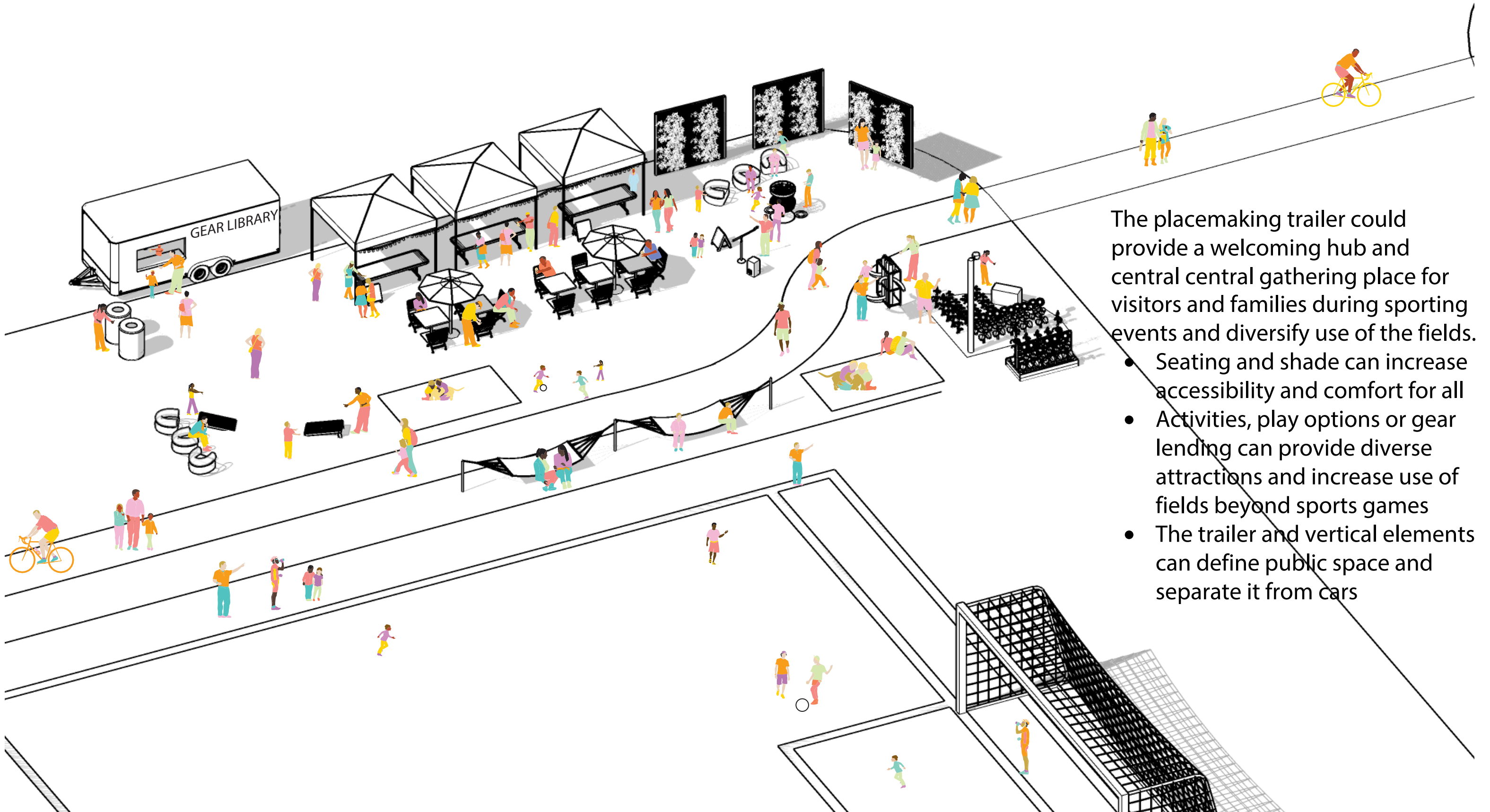
WHAT'S MISSING OR NEEDED?

- Winter parking lot plowing and year-round bathroom access
- Shade and seating for spectators and site visitors
- Access management and protection separating parking area and fields
- ADA accessible parking and pathways to access fields; safe crosswalk and sidewalk access for pedestrians; bike racks
- Signage and information about recreation and downtown offerings
- Activities and attractions such as play, games, or interpretive trails
- Flood-resilient or movable improvements

 BETTER PARKS TRAILER SETUP LOCATION

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PLACE TRAILER: ATHLETIC FIELDS ACTIVITY HUB

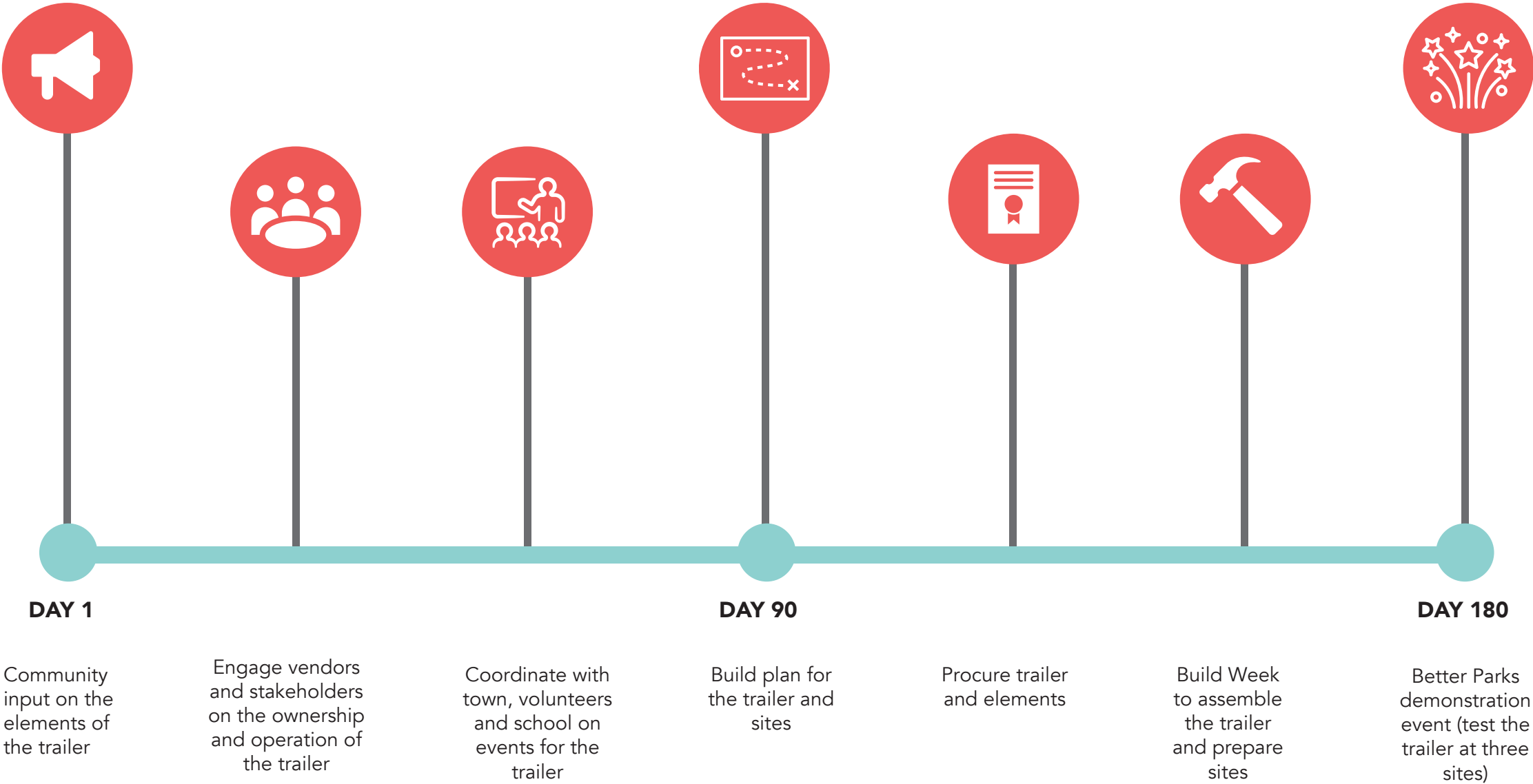


The placemaking trailer could provide a welcoming hub and central gathering place for visitors and families during sporting events and diversify use of the fields.

- Seating and shade can increase accessibility and comfort for all
- Activities, play options or gear lending can provide diverse attractions and increase use of fields beyond sports games
- The trailer and vertical elements can define public space and separate it from cars

NEXT STEPS

Creating and testing the Placemaking Trailer



Bethel will work with Team Better Block and local partners to plan, create, and setup the Placemaking Trailer and test it at three demonstration sites in 2023.

The start and end of the timeline will be determined by the start date of Bethel's VOREC grant and by a target date for the Better Parks event.

COST ESTIMATE

The cost of purchasing, setting up and stocking the placemaking trailer is estimated at approximately \$20,000 and is funded by the VOREC grant. Sample items and costs are shown below.

Item	Link	Price	Quantity	Total	Status
Place Trailer					
Cargo Trailer	https://www.bigtexttrailerworld.com/inventory/ezec-ezec-8x14-integrated-frame/	\$10,000	1	\$10,000.00	
Storage racks, locks, insurance and liscences		\$2,000	1	\$2,000.00	
Total				\$12,000.00	
Basic Place Equipment					
Public Address System	https://www.amazon.com/Rockville-Package-Speakers-Bluetooth-RPG2X10/dp/B07SXF8HFD/ref=sr_1_2_sspa?keywords=pa+system&qid=1666964731&qu=eyJxc2MiOiJlA3liwicXNhIjoNi44NiIsInFzcCI6IjYuMzQifQ%3D%3D&srefix=pa+%2Caps%2C138&sr=8-2-spons&psc=1	\$400	1	\$400.00	
Folding Tables	https://www.acehardware.com/departments/home-and-decor/cabinet-and-furniture-hardware/tables-and-desks/8315095	\$99	6	\$594.00	
Pop-up Canopy	https://www.acehardware.com/departments/outdoor-living/patio-furniture/canopies-and-gazebos/8028225	\$119	6	\$714.00	
Cafe table and chairs	https://www.amazon.com/Grand-Patio-Premium-Furniture-Foldable/dp/B07MC3V467/ref=sr_1_8?crid=14ENK5Z9D42TO&keywords=cafe+table+and+chairs+set+of+2&qid=1666965007&qu=eyJxc2MiOiJlM0liwicXNhIjoNi4wNSIsInFzcCI6IjUuNDQifQ%3D%3D&srefix=cafe+table+%2Caps%2C106&sr=8-8	\$119	6	\$714.00	
A Frame Sign	https://www.amazon.com/Magnetic-Chalkboard-Standing-Sidewalk-Sandwich/dp/B01NBG3QDF/ref=sr_1_9?crid=35PU15IYVQ3YZ&keywords=a+frame+sign&qid=1666965160&qu=eyJxc2MiOiJlM3liwicXNhIjoNi41NSIsInFzcCI6IjUuMTMifQ%3D%3D&srefix=a+frame+sign+%2Caps%2C105&sr=8-9	\$69	2	\$138.00	
Umbrella	https://www.acehardware.com/departments/outdoor-living/patio-furniture/patio-umbrellas/8389033	\$75	6	\$450.00	
Total				\$3,010.00	
Enhanced Place Equipment					
String Lights	https://www.amazon.com/Brightech-Ambience-Pro-Waterproof-Outdoor/dp/B075NS8YXG/ref=sr_1_2_sspa?keywords=solar+string+lights&qid=1666965489&qu=eyJxc2MiOiJljkzliwicXNhIjoNi43MCIslInFzcCI6IjcuNTUifQ%3D%3D&srefix=solar+string+%2Caps%2C118&sr=8-2-spons&psc=1	\$30	4	\$120.00	
Inflatable Chairs	https://www.acehardware.com/departments/home-and-decor/cabinet-and-furniture-hardware/air-mattresses/8924771	\$27	6	\$161.94	
Air Pump	https://www.acehardware.com/departments/outdoor-living/sporting-goods/hand-pumps/8039220	\$28	1	\$27.99	
Outside Mat	https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08X4HH6G3/ref=twister_B08X4HXCT9?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1	\$57	2	\$113.90	
Various Games, sled library, frisbee golf		\$100	20	\$2,000.00	
FirePit and Seating	Custom	\$2,000	1	\$2,000.00	
Movie Screen	https://www.amazon.com/VIVOHOME-Outdoor-Inflatable-Projector-Projection/dp/B08LL38MKR/ref=sr_1_4?keywords=inflatable+movie+screen+outdoor&qid=1666965922&qu=eyJxc2MiOiJlExliwicXNhIjoNi45NyIsInFzcCI6IjUuNjkifQ%3D%3D&s=lawn-garden&srefix=inflatable+movie+%2Clawnqarden%2C103&sr=1-4	\$289	1	\$289.00	
Total				\$4,712.83	
TOTAL				\$19,722.83	
Contingency				\$4,930.71	
GRAND TOTAL				\$24,653.54	