



MEMPHIS

CIVIC COMMONS

GROUNDWELL

An aerial photograph of Memphis, Tennessee, featuring the Mississippi River, a large island, and several skyscrapers. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green box containing text.

In Memphis, “a remarkable event in human history took place: cultural creativity and technological innovation were massively fused ... The special reputation of the place, free and wide open, helped it all to happen ... the music of an underclass could literally become the music of the world ... This was a revolution in attitudes and behavior, as profound as anything that has happened in the last 200 years.”

Sir Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization*, writing about the importance of Memphis in introducing mass culture to the world. -1998



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Image: Landsat

Introduction

The Memphis Civic Commons: The Fourth Bluff

Memphis is rich in civic and natural assets. From its unique position on the bluff of the nation's most storied river, to the unspoiled natural vista to the west, to the urban fabric that makes up its historic downtown. In considering the Memphis Civic Commons, the focus is on "The Fourth Bluff" - four blocks in the heart of downtown deeded in perpetuity for public use by the city's founders. The four key RCC assets of the Fourth Bluff are Cossitt Library, The Promenade at University of Memphis Law School, Memphis Park, and Mississippi River Park.

The goal of Reimagining the Civic Commons is for the Fourth Bluff to serve as a magnet, using connected, thriving public spaces to attract Memphians who may not ordinarily interact. Arts and culture will give reason to gather and linger in community with one another. Educational offerings will provide ready opportunities for low-income residents to enter the economic mainstream. And reimagined public spaces will draw families to play together. In this, we believe our Civic Commons can help Memphians develop a shared understanding of our history and a shared vision for the city's future.

CONTEXT MAP



EXPANDED ZONE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

MEMPHIS PARK

MAIN STREET

COURT SQUARE

PROMENADE

COSSITT LIBRARY

COURT AVE

UM SCHOOL OF LAW

RIVERWALK

BEALE STREET LANDING

BEALE STREET

Vision

Memphis seeks to incubate a Civic Commons in a concentrated area along the river to attract citizens of various economic backgrounds, races, and ages from all over the city to the riverfront and drive activity in the downtown core.

Reimagining the Civic Commons and using the downtown Memphis assets as our testing ground will teach us what interventions we can replicate to ensure every neighborhood has great public spaces. We will gather input and feedback from our local users as we learn alongside other Civic Commons cities about what works. The commons will be sustained and brought to scale through longer-term capital investments that bring permanency to successful prototypes. Our actions will be guided by the principle that our civic assets are places where a diverse group of people can share joy and vitality.

In Reimagining the Civic Commons, we seek to bridge connectivity gaps that are both cultural and physical. Physically, the pedestrian connections between the Civic Commons assets and the riverfront are tenuous. Culturally, the Civic Commons must also confront the public perception of these downtown spaces. As a city with a rich history, yet still struggling with a segregationist culture, the key goal in reimagining these sites is to design and create common public spaces where the diverse local population can come together to embrace the city, its history and each other to create an inclusive community that looks forward to Memphis' vibrant future.

Stakeholders

Memphis has assembled a local planning and implementation team positioned to take on the roles of convener, funder, and owner of specific assets to support the Memphis Civic Commons demonstration over the next three years as we learn with the Civic Commons network of partners:

- **City of Memphis**
- **University of Memphis School of Law**
- **Downtown Memphis Commission**
- **Community Development Council: Liveable Memphis**
- **Innovate Memphis**
- **Urban Art Commission Memphis**
- **Hattiloo Theatre**
- **The Cossitt Crew**
- **Riverfront Development Corporation**
- **Memphis Library Foundation**
- **Hyde Family Foundations**

In collaboration with Groundswell Design Group, Inc.

Process

Community Engagement and Outreach:

Community engagement and outreach is an integral component in our planning process. We seek to cultivate a greater sense of ownership and civic pride within all segments of the community. To encourage this engagement, the Memphis Civic Commons team has begun making efforts to connect with the current users of the assets as well as the broader community and has invited them to participate in the planning process by creating opportunities for the community to give feedback. We have been met with eagerness to participate, give feedback and suggestions for changes they would like to see and what programmatic elements they would use in the Fourth Bluff.

Prototyping:

Implementing prototype installations creates the opportunity to test key activation strategies within the community. The initial Fourth Bluff prototyping efforts have encouraged public involvement and sparked a conversation within the community about highest and best use of these assets - creating a unique venue for public engagement and feedback. For more details on our prototyping efforts thus far, see Appendix A.

Activation:

Incorporating feedback from our prototyping efforts, the civic assets will be activated with a variety of programmatic elements and events to attract users and foster a vibrant and engaged community space.

Analysis:

Activation events and programming will be studied and tracked with the goal of understanding the specific elements that drive each space's use. Continued monitoring and data collection throughout the activation will help to guide forward thinking and provide insight into how we can best structure future activations and improve upon existing sites.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS



Fire Pits



Games



Running and Biking Paths



Library



Grilling Stations



Swings



Art Installation



Playground



Flexible Seating



Music Concerts



Food



Fishing and Outdoor Recreation



Cafe



Light Installation



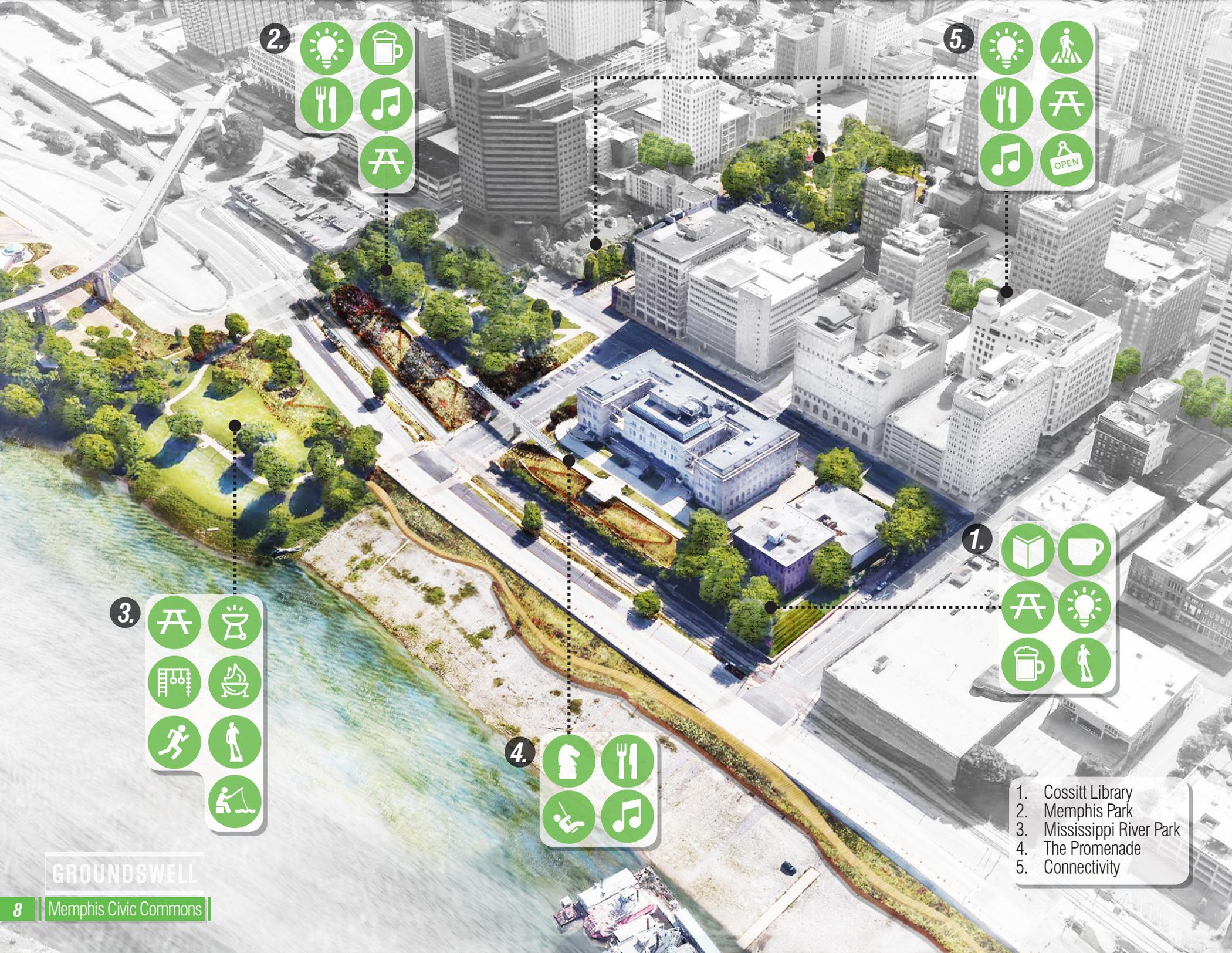
Beer Garden



Artistic Crosswalks



Retail



2.

- Lightbulb icon
- Coffee cup icon
- Fork and knife icon
- Music note icon
- Park icon

5.

- Lightbulb icon
- Person walking icon
- Fork and knife icon
- Park icon
- Music note icon
- OPEN sign icon

1.

- Open book icon
- Coffee cup icon
- Park icon
- Lightbulb icon
- Coffee cup icon
- Person walking icon

3.

- Park icon
- Person walking icon

4.

- Person walking icon
- Fork and knife icon
- Person walking icon
- Music note icon

- 1. Cossitt Library
- 2. Memphis Park
- 3. Mississippi River Park
- 4. The Promenade
- 5. Connectivity

GROUNDWELL

Asset 1:

Cossitt Library

EXPANDED ZONE

[Education. Community.
Arts. Meeting House.]

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

MEMPHIS PARK

MAIN STREET

COURT SQUARE

PROMENADE

COSSITT LIBRARY

COURT AVE

UM SCHOOL OF LAW

RIVERWALK

BEALE STREET LANDING

BEALE STREET

Memphis' first public library opened at the corner of Front and Monroe in 1893. Fashioned as a Romanesque monument, its red sandstone structure was, at the time, the most photographed landmark in the city. In 1958, the city undertook an attempt at modernization, resulting in two connected, but distinctly different buildings. The only vestiges of the old structure today are the sandstone wall surrounding the building and the rear addition added in 1924-25. Because of its physical location, the library and its grounds offer some of the best views of the riverfront in the entire city, though today that opportunity goes largely unrealized due to limited public access in key viewing areas -- the interior sections of the library with views of the waterfront are closed to the public, and the exterior grounds are not well connected to the street or riverwalk. **Cossitt** is a key intersection between the riverfront and downtown and has the opportunity to be an anchor for the Civic Commons.



Activation - [Cossitt Library]

Through strategic programming of both the interior and exterior spaces, the Cossitt Library can be the central hub of activity for the Memphis Civic Commons.

The activation strategy for **Cossitt Library** will bridge the gap between interior and exterior uses of space through site programming. A series of pop-up and prototype strategies will be developed and implemented, transforming the exterior spaces with the addition of reading gardens, an indoor/outdoor cafe, arts, music, performances, flexible seating, landscape improvements, and connections to the riverfront. These outdoor spaces will provide open communal spaces for the local community to gather and enjoy both the library grounds and the riverfront views.

As the heart of the Civic Commons, the Cossitt Library's interior spaces will be a testing ground to determine what the public wants from a contemporary library. Workforce and social services will be available to better engage with our current library users and help eliminate barriers to entering the economic mainstream. Increasing entrepreneurial opportunities within the arts ecosystem in Memphis will begin at Cossitt. We will partner with public agencies and local arts organizations, particularly those that are Black and Hispanic led, to design pop-ups and targeted programming for both arts and culture, and social services. Cossitt will expand the reach of the arts, grow local talent, and provide ready access to public services. Cossitt will be a draw for Memphians from all walks of life.

Program Elements



Library



Flexible Seating



Indoor Bar



Cafe



Light Installation



Art Installations

Activation - [Cossitt Library]



Reading Room Cafe



Pop-Up Gallery



Illuminated Paving



Music Library



Tool Lending Library

Asset 2:

Memphis Park

EXPANDED ZONE

[Authentically Local. Affordable. Accessible.
Diverse. Family Friendly. Music. History.]

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

MEMPHIS PARK

MAIN STREET

COURT SQUARE

PROMENADE

COSSITT LIBRARY

COURT AVE

RIVERWALK

UM SCHOOL OF LAW

BEALE STREET LANDING

BEALE STREET

Memphis Park sits atop the river bluff on Front Street between Court and Jefferson, connected by a bridge along the Promenade to the University of Memphis Law School and Cossitt Library. With sweeping views of the riverfront and beautiful shade trees, Memphis Park is unique, offering the only green space in the downtown area that provides a visual connection between downtown and the Mississippi River. Although the park is lightly used and unprogrammed now, future improvements and activation will transform Memphis Park into a functional and attractive place of respite and play for the entire community.



Activation - [Memphis Park]

The activation strategy for **Memphis Park** will focus on creating a one-of-a-kind space for the local community by providing not only site improvements, but also a variety of key amenities and opportunities for engagement through strategic programming activations. These projects will serve as a testing ground for the development of the long term transformation of the park, allowing for public input to be part of the process- a design-from-the-bottom-up approach.

In addition to site maintenance, landscape improvements and new Wi-Fi hot spots throughout the park, Memphis Park will be connected to the surrounding civic assets and attractions through a language of wayfinding signage, pathways and indicators.

The activation will cultivate a daytime garden for respite and escape, and an evening and weekend magnet for entertainment. Programming opportunities may include seasonal farmers markets to increase access to fresh local food, fairs, art shows and performances, outdoor concerts and movie screenings etc. A variety of food and beverage options and flexible seating arrangements will create reasons for visitors to stay and enjoy the park. A programmable light display will create a unique eye-catching canopy throughout the trees that will also serve as a beacon for any passersby.

Program Elements



Light Installation



Food



Beer Garden



Music Concerts



Flexible Seating

Activation - [Memphis Park]



Revolving local food truck vendors



Summer concert series



Colorful and flexible seating options



Layered lighting installations



Programmable LED light show

Asset 3:

Mississippi River Park

[Families. Community.
Recreation. Play.]

Just down the bluff from Memphis Park, **Mississippi River Park** is located directly on the riverfront adjacent to the Tennessee Welcome Center. Although mostly unimproved, Mississippi River Park has incredible potential. It is part of the Riverwalk and has the opportunity to be a key activation point and connector between the riverfront's amenities, as well as the promenade and the downtown area.



EXPANDED ZONE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

MEMPHIS PARK

MAIN STREET

COURT SQUARE

COURT AVE

UM SCHOOL OF LAW

BEALE STREET

PROMENADE

COSSITT LIBRARY

RIVERWALK

BEALE STREET LANDING



MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

Activation - [Mississippi River Park]

Mississippi River Park (MRP) will be the place to come and play with an activation strategy focused on active outdoor programming and social activities. Site enhancements and connectivity components, including landscaping improvements, new wayfinding signage and street crossing redesign, will set the stage for MRP's activation. We will emphasize promoting a sense of environmental stewardship of the Mississippi River and our roles as individuals in ensuring we have clean water and air. Physical connections to the riverfront will also be created, providing direct access to the water- a unique feature in the downtown area that will allow for kayaking, fishing etc. These improvements and connections will be created with long term sustainability in mind, working to preserve the natural beauty of Memphis' riverfront parks and making them accessible via biking, walking, and transit. MRP is an important location to completely connect the riverwalk, which will provide bike and pedestrian access to our network of trails users can take west across the Harahan Bridge to Arkansas and a system of levee trails along the Mississippi River, or east to Overton Park in the heart of midtown Memphis and further to Shelby Farms Park, one of the largest urban parks in the nation.

Programming activations at MRP will focus on creating an active outdoor space for the local community. Pop-up sporting equipment rentals (bicycles, kayaks, volleyball, Frisbee etc.) as well as lawn games (bocce, cornhole etc.) will engage the local community and invite users to interact with one another by playing a game together. A playground installation will engage children and families with natural play equipment designed and developed in partnership with the local community and local artists.

Mississippi River Park provides a place where the families from adjacent communities can gather outdoors to enjoy a barbeque and a variety of other food and beverage options. Visitors can make use of the fixed barbeque stations throughout the park as well as the range of flexible seating arrangements for both smaller groups and larger gatherings. Pop-up food and beverage vendors will also activate the park, providing a rotating schedule of refreshments and dining options for the community. An outdoor performance stage would double as a classroom space for arts organizations, with ballet, dance and musical performances with the Mississippi River as a backdrop.

Program Elements



Flexible Seating



Playground



Running and Biking Paths



Grilling Stations



Fire Pits



Art Installations



Fishing and Outdoor Recreation

Activation - [Mississippi River Park]



Shade covered picnic tables and flexible furnishings



Fire pits



Bass Pro Shop partnership kayak rentals



Natural playgrounds



Riverwalk connection



Recreational fishing



Art installations



Riverfront stewardship



Grilling stations

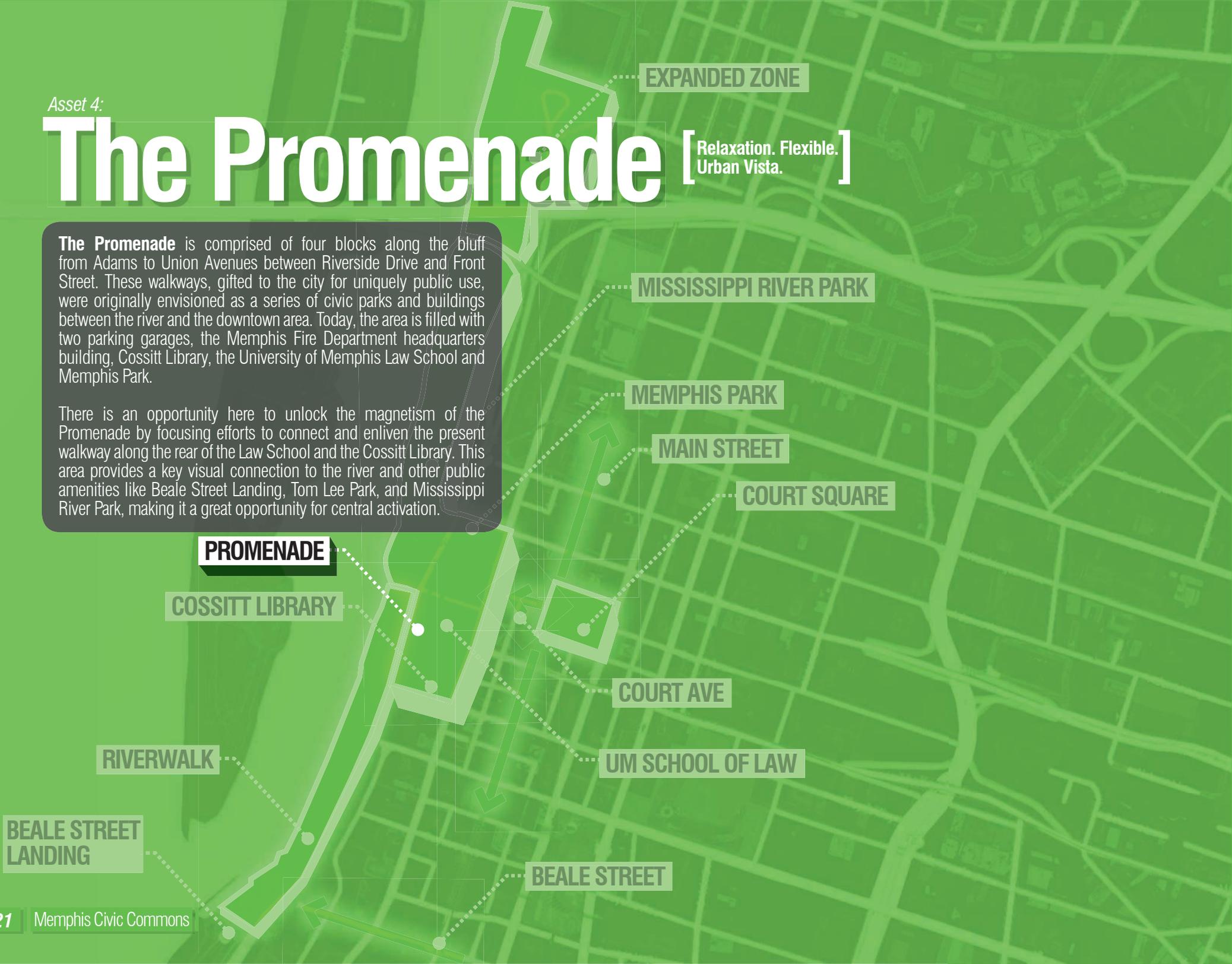
Asset 4:

The Promenade

[Relaxation. Flexible.
Urban Vista.]

The Promenade is comprised of four blocks along the bluff from Adams to Union Avenues between Riverside Drive and Front Street. These walkways, gifted to the city for uniquely public use, were originally envisioned as a series of civic parks and buildings between the river and the downtown area. Today, the area is filled with two parking garages, the Memphis Fire Department headquarters building, Cossitt Library, the University of Memphis Law School and Memphis Park.

There is an opportunity here to unlock the magnetism of the Promenade by focusing efforts to connect and enliven the present walkway along the rear of the Law School and the Cossitt Library. This area provides a key visual connection to the river and other public amenities like Beale Street Landing, Tom Lee Park, and Mississippi River Park, making it a great opportunity for central activation.



EXPANDED ZONE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

MEMPHIS PARK

MAIN STREET

COURT SQUARE

PROMENADE

COSSITT LIBRARY

COURT AVE

UM SCHOOL OF LAW

RIVERWALK

BEALE STREET LANDING

BEALE STREET



Activation - [The Promenade]

The activation strategy for the **Promenade** consists of creating a gathering space, rather than just a pass through. In addition to strategic landscape and site improvements, the Promenade can be activated through a series of fun and flexible seating arrangements, shade structures, swings, etc. The Promenade can be activated regularly with a rotating schedule of food trucks and pop-up concessions that offer fresh local food and beverage options to the community each day of the week.

In addition to seating and refreshment options, the Promenade can be brought to life with a series of amenities and programs that will engage the local community. Game rentals and table games can be scattered throughout the seating areas providing chess, checkers, jenga and other games for the community. The Little Free Library, a pop-up library activation, can also be placed throughout the site, providing free books for the taking and encouraging the local community to enjoy the site and the library amenities. The connection with the University of Memphis Law School creates other programming opportunities, for outdoor back-to-school events, tailgates and other options that are hosted by the law school but open to the community. The Law School in the Civic Commons provides residents access to the free student led law clinic which provides services such as criminal record expungements and legal tools to fight blight in their neighborhoods.

Program Elements



Games



Swings



Food



Music Concerts

Activation - [The Promenade]



"Porch" swings



Shaded lounge furniture



Short-term art installations



Student run food truck and culinary arts



Little book exchange



Morning food and beverage options

Connectivity

[Wayfinding. Green Infrastructure.
Urban Awareness. Complete Streets.]

Connectivity is the fiber that holds our civic assets together and transforms separate spaces into a network of connected places, bridging the space between civic assets. Memphis' Civic Commons is connected by a series of pedestrian walkways and roads that, although currently minimally activated, have great potential to be active and programmed zones within the Civic Commons.

The Main Street corridor connects Uptown to South Main and encompasses an 8-block pedestrian mall, the Main Street trolley line, and a multi-mode transit facility at each end. The urban design of Main Street has great potential due to its existing layout and infrastructure; however, it lacks continuous vibrancy and activation.

Main Street has been the recipient of a TIGER Grant (Main to Main, connecting Main Street in Memphis, TN to Main Street in West Memphis, AR via Big River Crossing - a 2,000 ft. bike/pedestrian boardwalk across the Mississippi River on the Harahan Railroad Bridge) to improve streetscaping, lighting, sidewalks, roadways, and drainage. In the long term, the Downtown Memphis Commission hopes to increase foot traffic, attract retail and office tenants, create new housing opportunities, and increase amenities for residents, workers and tourists as well as create a more sustainable downtown through public recycling programs and better stormwater management.

EXPANDED ZONE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK

MEMPHIS PARK

MAIN STREET

COURT SQUARE

COURT AVE

UM SCHOOL OF LAW

RIVERWALK

BEALE STREET
LANDING

BEALE STREET



Lenny's
sub shop

SinCityWings.com

SinCityWings.com

POP-UP MARKET

← COURT SQUARE

MEMPHIS PARK

GROUND SWELL

Activation - [Connectivity]

Key to the success of the Civic Commons is connecting the civic and commercial assets downtown to each other and adjacent neighborhoods. A comprehensive connectivity strategy will strengthen, and build both physical and technological connections between downtown and low-income residential areas to the immediate north and south.

In Memphis' Civic Commons, we will improve access by providing safe and visually pleasing entries radiating out from the Fourth Bluff. A pedestrian oriented design, coordinated with non-car centric transportation options, will draw new users from adjacent neighborhoods. Easy wayfinding will include street crossings and public art, with new signage drawing Memphians to key historic sites, civic attractions and events. Pairing Wi-Fi hotspots with clear paths to the Civic Commons via bike, walking, and transit will create a vibrantly activated downtown core.

Redesigning Court Street, only one block away from the Fourth Bluff, presents a key opportunity to create a pedestrian oriented thoroughfare connecting Main Street to the Civic Commons. The redesign will create a replicable model of a living street, including shared space for pedestrians and vendors, and traffic calming with motorized vehicles limited to walking pace.

Program Elements



Light Installations



Food



Music Concerts



Artistic Crosswalks



Flexible Seating



Retail

Activation - [Connectivity]



Wayfinding opportunities



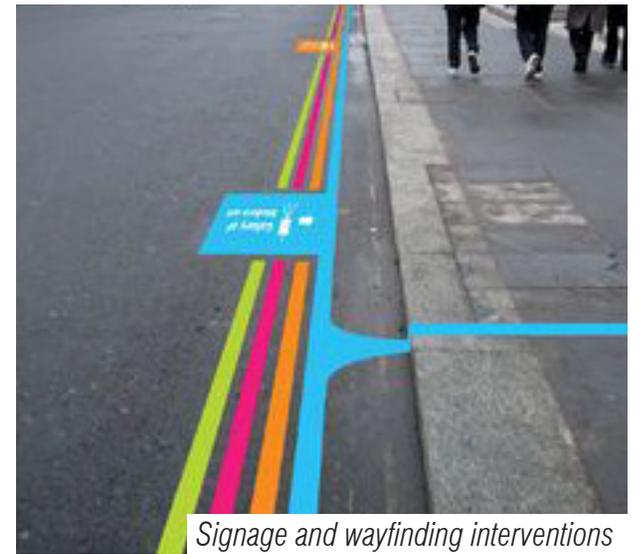
Gateway signage to the 'Fourth Bluff'



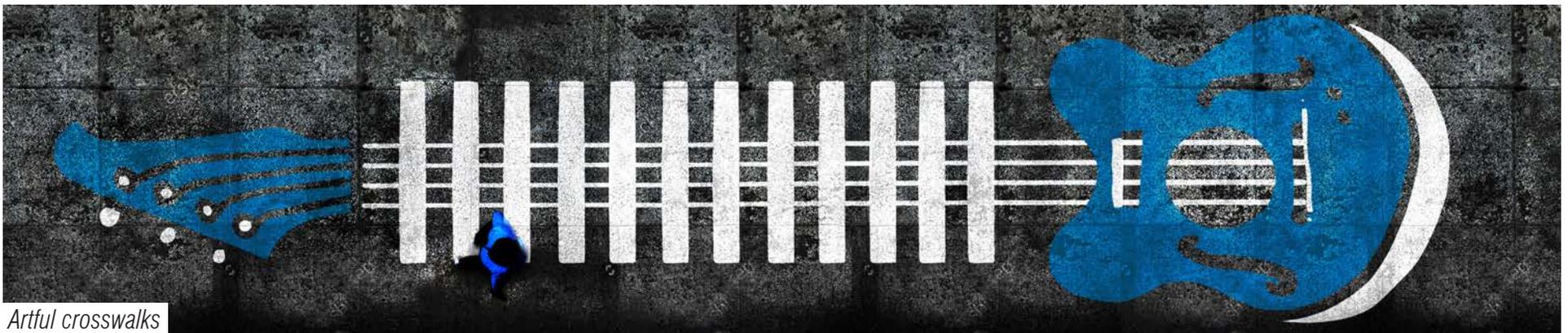
Green infrastructure strategies



Pop-up retail



Signage and wayfinding interventions



Artful crosswalks

An aerial photograph of Memphis, Tennessee, showing the Mississippi River on the left, a bridge crossing it, and a dense urban area with various buildings and a highway on the right. A green rounded rectangle is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing text.

Conclusion

Reimagining the Memphis Civic Commons is a direct investment in the urban core of Memphis - an investment of political, human, and financial capital in some of the most historic places in Memphis. The Civic Commons will serve both existing downtown residents and workers, as well as a variety of communities from adjacent neighborhoods. Affordable programming and activations will connect individuals to create a vibrant community and will spark the sort of public conversations that can shape the future of Memphis. By investing in the Fourth Bluff Civic Commons, we can create a unique network of assets and programming that encourage economic development while fostering a culture of civic and community engagement.

Appendix

- Prototyping [***Appendix A***]

Prototyping

Cossitt Library

Thanks to the Reimagining the Civic Commons work, attention has been paid to Cossitt for the first time in many years. Because the Cossitt Branch has been slated for closure, the library has suffered from disinvestment and the second floor and historic portion of the building has been closed over 10 years. Because of the new RCC energy, library staff and the Cossitt Crew (a group of daily users, many of whom are homeless, who care for the library and grounds daily) have made a herculean effort to clean up and clear out years of junk from the closed portion of the building and get it to a state of being able to be used for temporary activations. Thanks to RCC, we have also trimmed trees to uncover spectacular river views and highlight the park-like grounds of the Cossitt. An installation of LED lights now graces the louvered façade of the building that faces Front Street.

The Cossitt will be the centerpiece of the Memphis Fourth Bluff Civic Commons because it is the site where economic integration will occur. As a result of RCC, we will seek a partner to help restore and engage the community to determine the highest and best ways to preserve, adapt, and reuse the currently closed historic portion of Cossitt to meet the needs of today's users. The primary goal will be to continue to fulfill the purpose of libraries – free and equitable access to materials that meet the public demand for increased education and knowledge. With an emphasis on arts and culture, Cossitt will be a space that encourages people to share ideas and collaborate. Programming will increase community interaction and activity. Cossitt will be an experiential community resource for skill building, innovation, education, and will help build a culture of civic discourse in Memphis.

Prototyping Quotes:

- “Cossitt Crew” - a group of daily users, many of whom are homeless, look after and care for the library: James says some ask him why he *“does all that stuff around the library.”* James says he cares about and needs the library, *“...it’s not the library’s fault I’m homeless.”*
- *“This should be a space where anyone can come to escape.”*
- *“The river is why Memphis is here!”*



Before prototyping



Cossitt Crew member James Cox scraping old floor tiles



New LED lights at Cossitt Library



A temporary wheelchair ramp made the space truly accessible for all Memphians. Kim Tutt (L) chats with City Engineer and race participant Manny Belen (R).



On April 16, 2016 the University of Memphis Student Bar Association held their Race Judicata 5K after party on the grounds of Cossitt. We used this day to invite participants and the general public to the second floor space and gather feedback about future uses of Cossitt.





Tuesday, April 19 at 7 p.m. Hattiloo Theatre presented a free performance of their gospel musical “Mahalia” in the second-floor space at the Cossitt. Set in such a unique environment and with a powerful choir and electrifying band backing up Deborah Thomas and Sameka Chel. B. Johnson, with support from Tymika Chambliss and Jonathan Williams, this exclusive performance was a memorable experience enjoyed by 300 guests from 16 Memphis zip codes.

Video of their performance:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/apb6j89jjqa10z0/File%20Apr%2020%2C%204%2014%2059%20PM.mov?dl=0>



Our Civic Commons work will have a heavy emphasis on arts and culture as a way to engage citizens. Cossitt can be a place to develop local African American and Hispanic arts organizations to ensure they are first rate, durable, sustainable, and able to develop local talent. Growing the arts profession and ecosystem in underserved communities will lead to more opportunity and help us develop, recruit, and retain talent.

Prototyping

Memphis Park

Designed by renowned landscape architect George Keesler, Memphis Park sits in the center of the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff, the last in a series of high bluffs along the lower Mississippi River in West Tennessee. This park was named Confederate Park until 2012 when it was quickly renamed Memphis Park by the Memphis City Council in a defensive move as State of Tennessee legislation was pending to prohibit renaming or removing civil war monuments and memorials from public spaces. For this reason the confederate monuments including a statue of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, must remain in the park.

The Civic Commons is an opportunity for civic discourse where we discuss the totality of our past and determine as a community our direction and story today. In addition to typical prototyping activation in Memphis Park such as lighting, flexible seating, and checkers we installed temporary signage indicating this area as “The Fourth Bluff” in an effort to draw attention to the park and start a new narrative.

Prototyping Quotes:

- *“The river is an important aspect of Memphis that isn’t anywhere else.”*
- *“People need to get closer to the river.”*
- *“A favorite Memphis memory is kids playing with all different kinds of kids.”*
- *“We’ve been watching out our window all week and thought we’d come out and see what’s going on.”* Employees in Raymond James building across the street from Memphis Park.



Confederate Park, Memphis, Tenn.



Memphis Park has a beautiful layout and design we want to preserve and highlight. Memphis Park has a natural advantage that is a huge draw during hot Memphis summers – shade. Memphis Park can be the living room for the core of downtown, providing space for lunch in the park or happy hour complete with music, food, drink, and pop-up retail. Our vision is relaxation, respite, and fun at Memphis Park with contemporary activations and landscaping that is a nod to the park of the past as in this 1910 postcard.

Our prototype for Memphis Park was intended to get people to linger. Pre-activation data had an average of 28 passing through the park at lunch time and no one stopping. Moveable furniture, checkerboard tables and checkers, and café lights increased the number that stopped and sat to 25 while the number that passed through remained the same.





Prototyping

Connectivity

We want the Civic Commons/Fourth Bluff assets to be a destination for Memphians, particularly residents of adjacent low income neighborhoods to the north and south of downtown. Families in North and South Memphis who do not own a car have several public transit options and it is a short bike ride to the Fourth Bluff. In 2017, 60 bike share stations will be installed in Memphis. Stations are initially planned at Fourth Bluff sites and in South Memphis. We want people to automatically know it is easy to travel to the Fourth Bluff and provide programming and amenities that will be a magnet to the sites.

The pedestrian connections between the Civic Commons assets and to the riverfront are tenuous. Many of the sites are surrounded by asphalt and concrete, sidewalks are in disrepair, and the Riverwalk is not completely connected. The Riverwalk cuts off at certain points, making users feel unwelcome and unsure what to do next. Pain points are located behind Cossitt Library, where the Riverwalk does an awkward dogleg that brings one up the bluff to Front Street then back down to Riverside Drive, and in Mississippi River Park where the trail leads to the rear of the State of Tennessee Welcome Center then to an isolated gravel path behind a concrete flood wall.

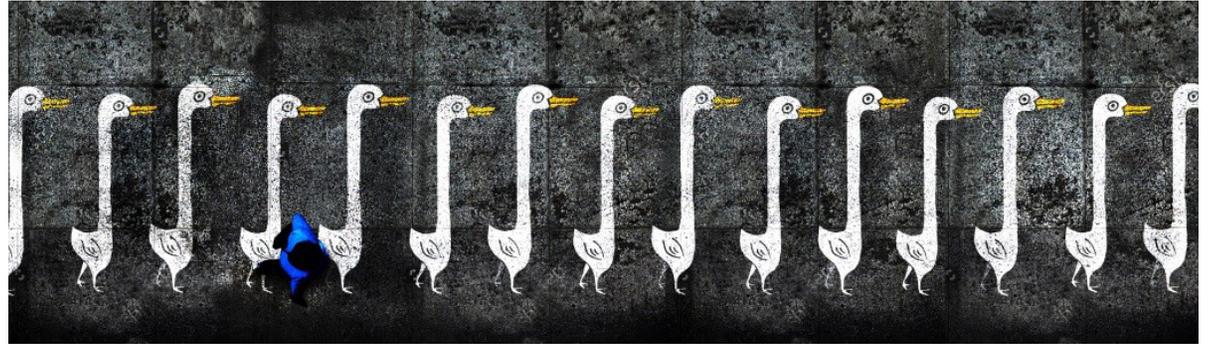
Redesigning for pedestrians rather than cars by using tools such as informational and wayfinding signage and decorative crosswalks helps make easy and obvious connections for would be users. Uncovering the accessibility of the Civic Commons sites this way provides “breadcrumbs” that entice users from areas of activity such as Tom Lee Park and Main Street to explore more of downtown and connect directly with the river.

Our Civic Commons work involves making a better connection from Memphis Park on Front Street to Main Street and Court Square Park by creating a pedestrian friendly, sidewalk café environment along Court Street. Currently Court Street is a sea of asphalt and parking for several hotels and office buildings. Greening Court Street with rain gardens, public recycling containers, having pop-up retail, food trucks, and café seating along Court Street will increase activity in a desolate area and better connect Memphis Park and the Fourth Bluff to Main Street. Court Square Park is actively programmed and maintained by the Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC) which manages the downtown BID. DMC has done yeoman’s work eliminating commercial vacancy on Main Street. Thanks to their incentives and support to entrepreneurs and property owners, several block of Main are thriving. However, the section of Main in the Civic Commons footprint and to the north has some persistent vacancy. Increased activity in a vibrant Fourth Bluff Civic Commons area will help grow occupancy rates in this section of Main Street.

Prototyping Quotes:

- *“The things between things are so important downtown.”*

Our partners at Urban Art Commission commissioned acclaimed local artist Kong Wee Pang to design decorative crosswalks for the Civic Commons.



Here are City crews installing one design on Riverside Drive to draw attention to getting from Cossitt to the Riverwalk and from Memphis Park to the river and Mississippi River Park.