

OMAHA URBAN THINKSCAPES: PLAY HAPPENS EVERYWHERE

DEBORA B. WISNESKI

**UNL CYFS EARLY CHILDHOOD
RESEARCH SUMMIT**

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Omaha





**OMAHA URBAN
THINKSCAPES**

OUTLINE

The Issue of Playful Learning and Equity
Community- Based Participatory Research
for Designing Playful Public Spaces
Context
Stakeholders and Community Partners
Questions
Research Plan: Family and Community Play
Events
Play as Methodology & Data Analysis
Current Findings
Implications for Community Play Research

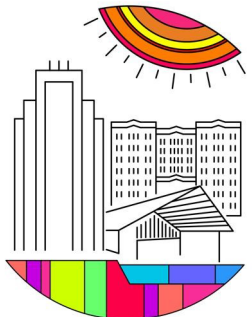
COMMUNITY- BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH FOR DESIGNING PLAYFUL PUBLIC SPACES

“Develops research partnerships with nonacademic stakeholders to develop and execute a research project based on a particular community-identified problem or issue.” (Leavy, 2022, p 224)



COMPONENTS OF CBPR

- Interdisciplinary background
- Funding Opportunities
- Professional Networks
- Collaborators/stakeholders
- Community Advisory Board
- Cultural Competency
- Social Justice Oriented
- Problem focused
- Multiple perspectives
- Power-sharing
- Leadership Roles
- Ethical Praxis
- Trust and Rapport



OMAHA URBAN
THINKSCAPES

CONTEXT

South Omaha

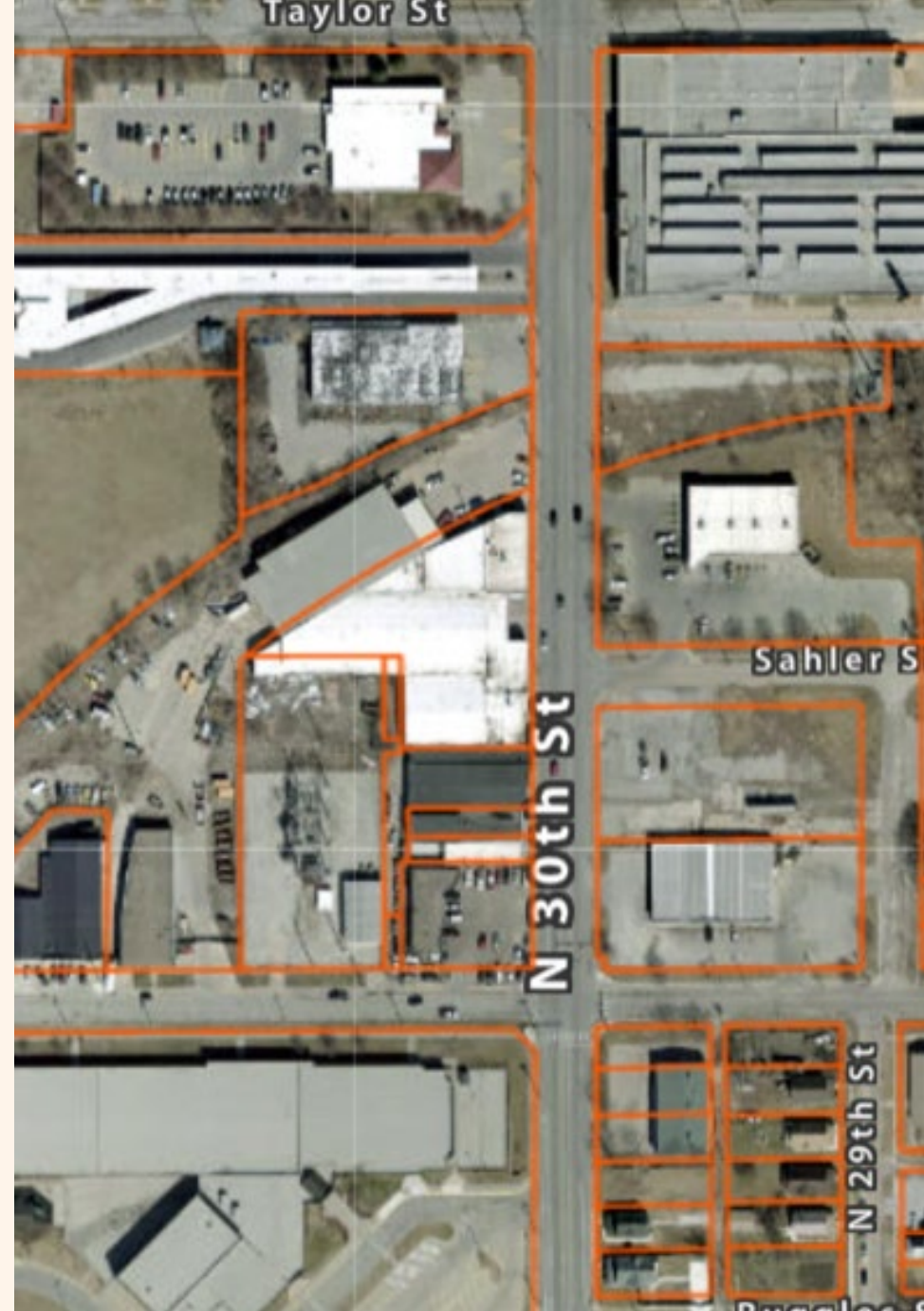
Plaza de la Raza



CONTEXT

North Omaha

In Design
Conversations:
Ernie Chambers
Park



CONTEXT



Brazil Urban Thinkscape



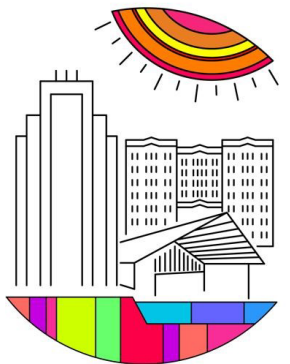
STAKEHOLDERS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Connect GO	UNO College of Education, Health, & Human Sciences	Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium	University of Nebraska Omaha
Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties	Buffett Early Childhood Institute	The Union for Contemporary Art	Amplify Arts
Omaha By Design	Spark CDI	Canopy South	RDG Design
AIM Institute	Lamp Rynearson	Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network	Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
Metro Area Transit	City of Omaha Parks and Planning	Papio Natural Resources District	Prairie STEM
Here For You For Them	Mulhall's Omaha Garden And Landscaping Center	The Wellbeing Partners	The House of Afros, Capes & Curls ~ Young History Detectives
AARP of Nebraska	UNO Service-Learning Academy	Luminarium	Omaha Children's Museum
	Why Arts?	Union of Contemporary Art	

QUESTIONS

- A) How do you play? (Families)
- B) How do you imagine playful community spaces? (Families & community partners)
- C) How/what do we learn and play in our new shared play spaces?



Omaha Urban Thinkscapes

The vision of Omaha Urban Thinkscapes is to create playful public spaces that improve the health, well-being and development of babies and children and their families in Metro-Omaha. The Thinkscapes project will help design, build, research, and plan cultural/educational events on new public spaces for playful engagement and learning.

Community Advisory

Curate diverse community partners from across the spectrum of talent and expertise including art, history, design, city/county, transit, planning, health, STEM, landscape, natural resources, and education.

1



UNO Strategic Investment

Received Strategic Investment grant from University of Nebraska Omaha to research issues of Social Justice, Inequality, Race and Class in connection with play, learning and equitable spaces & opportunities.

2



Community Launch

Introduce concept to the community with a series of meetings led by Playful Learning Landscapes Exec. Dir. Dr. Sarah Lytle, and host keynote address featuring Dr. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek.

3



4

Community Engagement

Host Family Play Dates in collaboration with the North and South Omaha Learning Community Centers.

5

Design, Research, Place & Space

Harness momentum and research results to discern next steps toward site choice and design conception.



WEB PAGE

<https://raisemetoread.org/learning-happens-everywhere/>

PHASE 1: Design and Planning

PHASE 2: Site and Study Preparation

PHASE 3: Implementation and Data Gathering

PHASE 4: Community Reporting



OMAHA URBAN
THINKSCAPES



PLAY AS METHODOLOGY & DATA ANALYSIS



OMAHA URBAN
THINKSCAPES



RESEARCH PLAN: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNER PLAY EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Family Play Events

EAT MEET PLAY

#1 Building Blocks

#2 Dance

#3 Build a Play Space
with Loose Parts

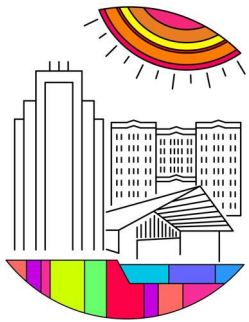
Community Advisory Board Meetings

#1 Playful Learning Landscapes Presentation/Launch

#2 Presentation of Preliminary Family Play Events
Findings and Discussion

#3 Artists Charette in N. Omaha/ Architect Planning
in S. Omaha

#4 PESTLE Activity and Build a Play Space with
Loose Parts



OMAHA URBAN
THINKSCAPES

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Photography of Play

Auto-photography of Play

Drawings of "How do you play?" on hexagons

Fieldnotes by researchers and student playworkers/researchers including conversations with parents and educators and community members

Artifacts/notes from meetings

1. Researchers organize and review documents after each play session using preliminary consensus coding (Richards & Hemphill, 2018)
2. Photos and hexagons were posted at the next family play event for discussion and additions
3. Preliminary findings were presented community advisory board meetings to discuss and get feedback



Family Play Dates

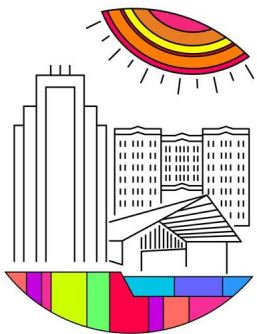


CURRENT FINDINGS



“TO PLAY IS TO SHARE TIME **TOGETHER** AND EXPERIENCE NEW THINGS- **TO KNOW** WHAT WE LIKE AND WHAT WE DON'T TOO”

Adults	Children	Family play
Accessibility	Family-centered	Adults/children take turns leading play
Upkeep	Outdoor- bikes, sports, playgrounds, nature	Exploration of materials, movement, modality
	Indoor games- board, video, card	Parallel & collaborative play between family members



COMMUNITY MEMBER FINDINGS



PUBLIC PLAY SPACE IS UNIQUE TO EACH COMMUNITY.

South Omaha

- Welcoming all people to our community with Latinx culture highlighted
- For community events
- Colorful
- STEM and culture focused

North Omaha

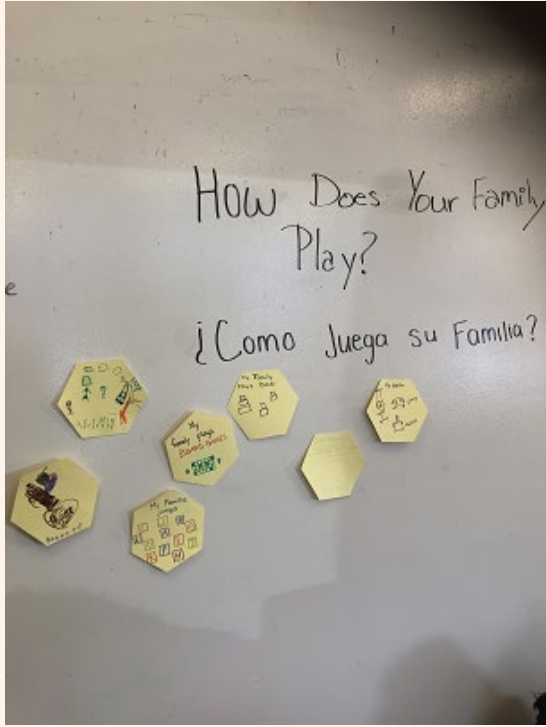
- “for us and by us”
- History and community voice
- Intergenerational: exciting and relaxing
- Unstructured and organized



NEXT STEPS

- Design spaces based on these findings with community artists, educators, and architects
- Procure Funding for building of sites
- Expand to New spaces: Benson neighborhood
- Fund community researchers to document the play in the new sites including photo-voice and other auto-ethnographic tools





Community Play

What we know about play must include the perspectives of the players themselves in the context of their culture and community.

Centering the perspectives of children and families in the context of community reframes how we understand play in the academy and with children.

Play is not only the topic for study; it is the context, the medium, and method of research.

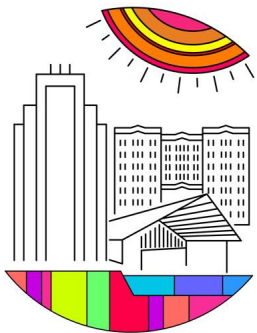
How families play and learn together can inform how we design educational spaces AND curriculum.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY PLAY RESEARCH



REFERENCES

- Bustamante, A. S., Hassinger-Das, B., Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. M. (2019). Learning landscapes: Where the science of learning meets architectural design. *Child Development Perspectives*, 13(1), 34-40.
- Hassinger-Das, B., Palti, I., Golinkoff, R. M., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2020). Urban thinkscape: Infusing public spaces with STEM conversation and interaction opportunities. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 21(1), 125-147.
- Krishnamurthy, S. (2019). Reclaiming spaces: child inclusive urban design. *Cities & Health*, 3(1-2), 86-98.
- Leavy, P. (2022). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Publications.
- Roy, A. (2020). Children Living in Sustainable Built Environments: New Urbanisms, New Citizens.
- Schlesinger, M. A., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2019). Playful Learning Landscapes: Creating skill-building experiences in community spaces. *Childhood Education*, 95(4), 3-9.
- Stegelin, D. A., Fite, K., & Wisneski, D. (2015). The critical place of play in education. *A Collaboration Between the US Play Coalition and the Association of Childhood Education International*.
- Yogman, M., Garner, A., Hutchinson, J., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2018). The power of play: A pediatric role in enhancing development in young children. *Pediatrics*, 142(3).
-





**OMAHA URBAN
THINKSCAPES**

THANK YOU

Debora Wisneski, PhD
dwisneski@unomaha.edu