

# BURNHAM POINTE BETTER BLOCK

## AFTER-ACTION REPORT



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# INTRODUCTION

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The Burnham Pointe Better Block was my first project with Better Block, and it went above and beyond any of my expectations. The community's commitment to creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment and investing in locally owned businesses led to a lasting impact on the neighborhood.



Throughout the project, the resident's passion for the neighborhood was evident through their hard work and their eagerness to create a beautiful block. The Burnham Pointe Better Block was just the first step in improving the area for the future. By identifying the key players, testing new ideas, and making connections between the City and the community, the Better Block is proud to enable and inspire people to take back their public spaces and transform them into pedestrian/bike friendly spaces.

—Amanda Bagwell  
Better Block  
Project Manager

# MAYOR DAN DEVINE

I first learned of Better Block through a colleague who represents a suburb of St. Louis. He had seen Founding Director Jason Roberts speak at a Missouri Municipal League event and spoke very highly of the organization. I was reintroduced to them at a National League of Cities Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. They were mentioned in one of their mobile workshops.

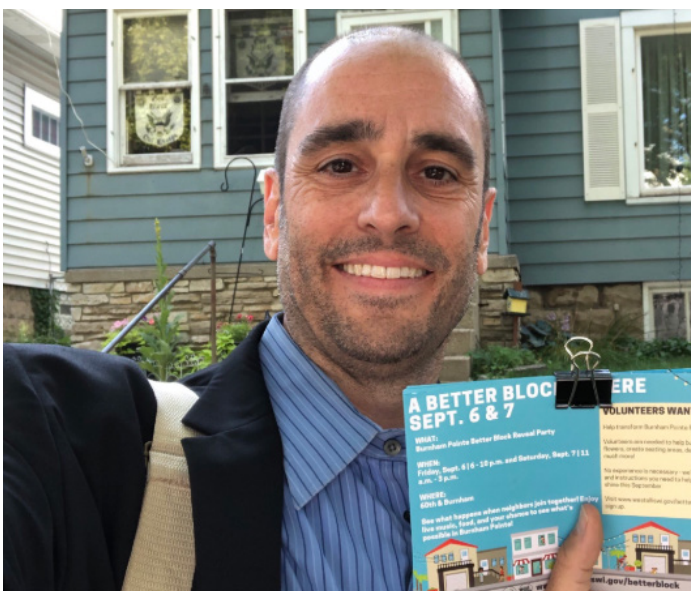
The City of West Allis is a suburb of Milwaukee with a population of about 60,000 people. In the 1980s the city lost Allis Chalmers, its largest employer, taxpayer, and basically its identity. Certain neighborhoods were hit harder than others. Over the years, the city has worked hard to rebound from the loss. There have been some wins in the community with redevelopment, and there have been some areas with continuing challenges. One of the areas I had identified as having a need for enhancements is called Burnham Pointe. There had been fledgling attempts to organize there but nothing seemed to stick. The area has several restaurants, a few shops, a bowling alley, but also many vacancies. It does have a unique mix of retail surrounded by residential neighborhoods. It became apparent that Better Block would be a good group to work with on this neighborhood.

Our process began by hitting the streets, knocking on doors and visiting business owners in the area. The heavy focus on community engagement led to a packed banquet hall at Burnham Bowl to kick off the project and hear the neighborhood's thoughts and concerns. The information collected there was scrutinized and ultimately became a two-day showcase of what Burnham Pointe could be. We added temporary bike lanes, bump outs, outdoor seating, had two stages for live music and food trucks. We also borrowed planters from the Wisconsin State Fair Park that really livened up the intersection. We had a small store assemble an impromptu jam session on the sidewalk with their Uncle's bongo drums. Neighbors came out who had lived in the area for 50+ years and were ecstatic that there was some new activity in their neighborhood.

Working with Better Block was a pleasant experience. We had many phone calls and teleconference meetings with them, and overall, they were great at getting us on track with our event. I believe that the seeds of change have been planted in this neighborhood. We have already heard from a local business about adding a permanent food truck park. While our Wisconsin winter has currently set in, I am confident that next spring we will be able to pick up the momentum again and see further progress.

We look forward to the continuance of the progress.

—Mayor Dan Devine





**BACKGROUND**

Beginning a Better Block



## Background of Burnham Pointe



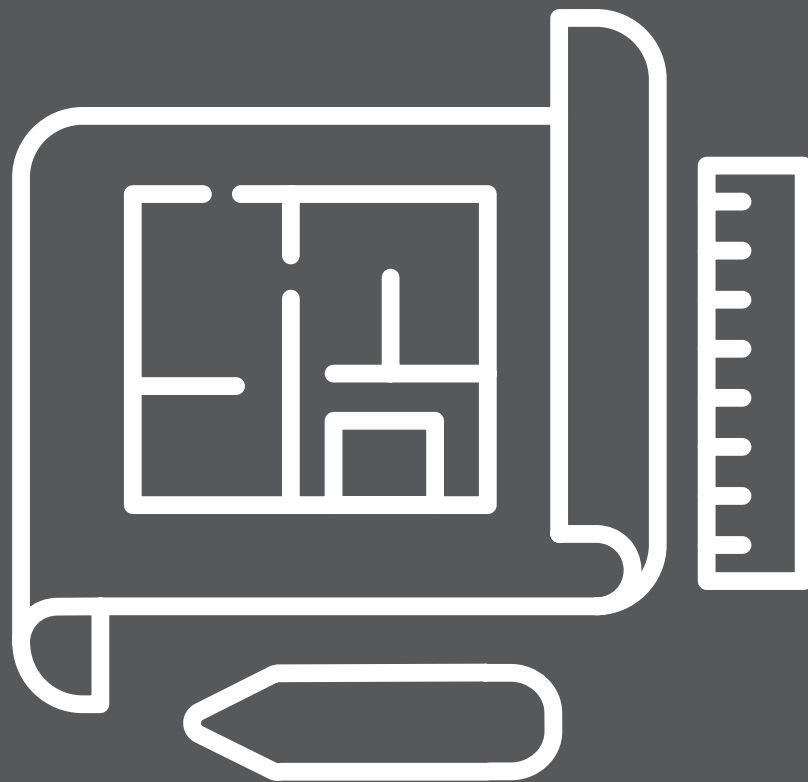
The site that was chosen for the Better Block was at the intersection of Burnham Street and 60th Street, as well as a city-owned gravel lot, half a block away from the intersection. The space is home to many beloved restaurants, such as Buenavista Taqueria, Las Palmas, and Bari's Pizza, as well as a funky art gallery, a classic barbershop, and a convenience store.

During our survey period, we saw that traffic safety was an important topic among community members who noted high traffic

speeds along 60th Street. The intersection of 60th and Burnham was designed to prioritize fast-moving traffic rather than the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, deterring people from enjoying in the space.

Likewise, the community survey results indicated that neighbors saw the need for more gathering spaces and alterations to the overall aesthetic in the area. The intersection already has a lot going for it, with the popular restaurants, a gallery, a barbershop, and more, and just needs some fine-tuning to turn it into a destination area where people choose to visit and explore.





# THE PROJECT

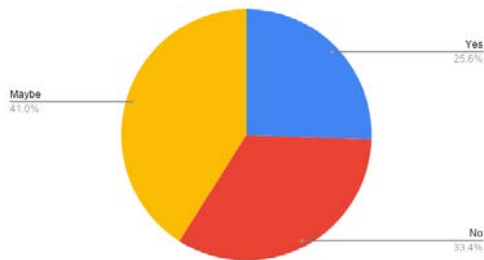


# THE SURVEYS

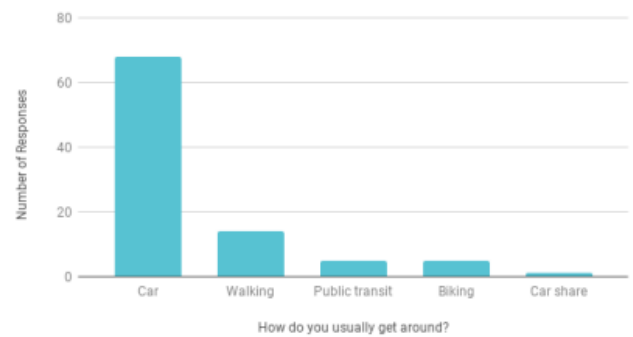
The Better Block process started with surveying the community and having conversations to identify the neighborhood's issues, potential solutions, and the vision that residents have for the area.

The biggest concerns for the Burnham Pointe neighborhood were safety and aesthetics. They also asked for a kid play areas, spaces to gather, and more pedestrian-friendly options to get around.

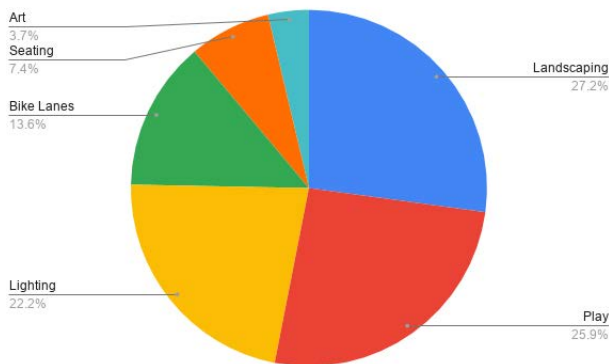
Do you feel safe walking in Burnham Pointe?



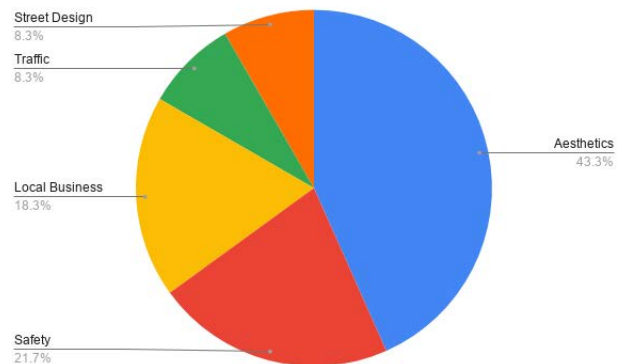
How do you usually get around?



What would you like to see more of in Burnham Pointe?



What improvements would you like in Burnham Pointe?



The biggest take-aways from this data are that people want better aesthetics, more gathering spaces, more landscaping, and would like to feel safer in the area. This is the main data will be used to create the design of the Better Block.

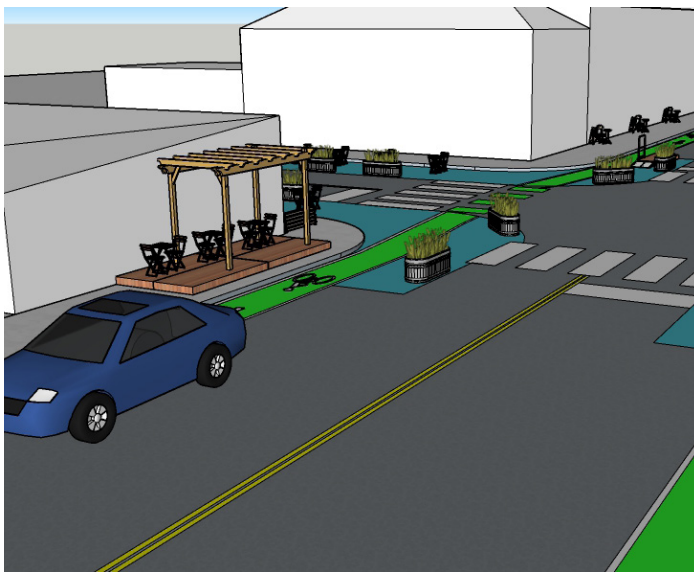
# THE DESIGN

Based on the survey results, we created a list of interventions that could be installed in Burnham Pointe to address some of the issues that residents identified.

## Public Infrastructure

### Lighting

One of the biggest concerns for the area was lighting. String lights were hung around each of the corners of the intersection to give the businesses more lighting, and make it a more pedestrian-friendly space. We also added string lights to the city-owned gravel lot that dramatically changed the atmosphere of the space. The space felt warmly lit and safe for people to enjoy themselves.



### Bike Lanes

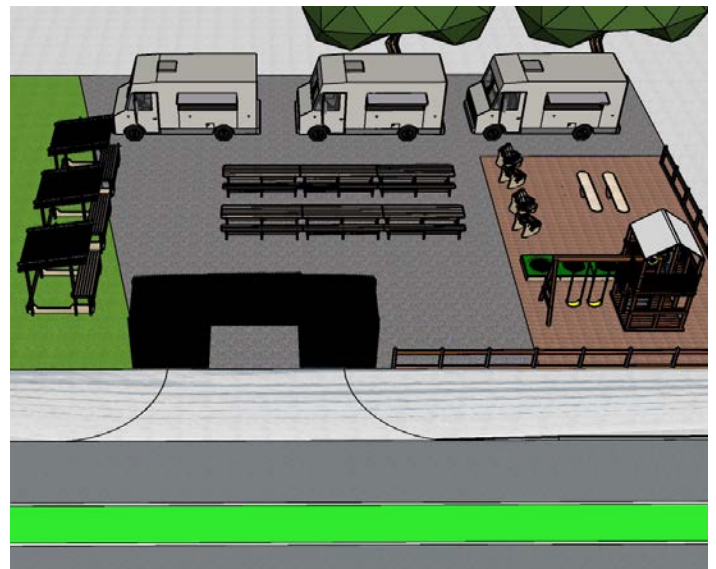
The surveys showed that the community wanted bike lanes in the area as well. We decided to implement a Dutch Intersection, which has the bike lane along the curb, and provides a barrier at right turns to make it safer for bicyclists. In the design, bike lanes were placed against the curbs, and the parking lane on the outside of the bike lane. We also utilized large stock tanks from the City to act as barriers, creating an island to protect cyclists from cars making right turns.

### Landscaping

To introduce more landscaping into the area, we borrowed 16 large, triangular-shaped stock tanks from the City and placed them bump-outs we created at the intersection in the parking lane. The stock tanks were filled with bright, lush plants that acted as not only a barrier against traffic to make people feel safer, but also as a pleasant aesthetic for the space.

### Community Space

Another key aspect of the design was creating places for people to gather. A local playscape designer, GRG Playscapes, designed a play area in the city-owned gravel lot. A pergola was built outside of Buenavista Taqueria to provide more shade and outdoor seating for people to use. The bump-outs at each of the corners in the intersection were utilized as seating areas, as well as a gathering space outside of each of the businesses.



## Crosswalks, Planters, Bike Lanes



# CITY ENGAGEMENT

## Engagement

The City was instrumental in getting volunteers, community interest, and more for the Better Block event. Multiple times, Mayor Dan Devine and City employees handed out flyers and talked to neighbors to promote the event. They marketed the event in English and Spanish so it would reach as many people as possible.

The City reached out to community members by social media, by flyer, by word of mouth, and more. Often times, they went to the neighbors themselves to get more information out. By working with the local business owners, they were able to put flyers up in the storefronts, and get the owners to promote the event to their customers as well.



# LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

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## Build Elements

This project relied heavily on using local partners to help create permanent elements for the site that showcased West Allis' character, as well as meeting the needs of community members.

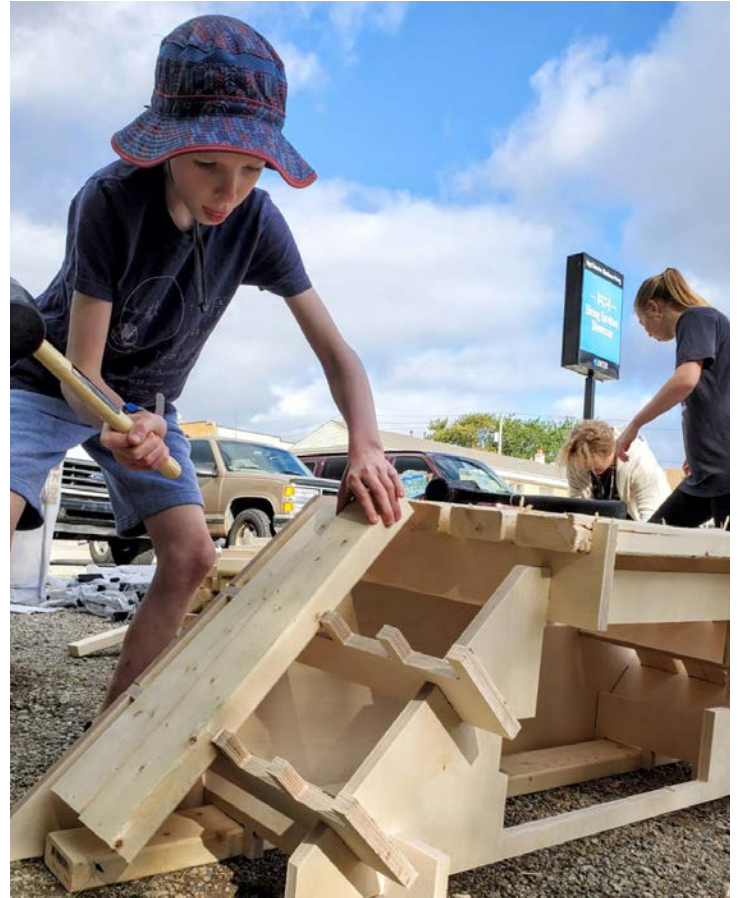
One of the items built for the project was a pergola for Buenavista Taqueria. The pergola was designed and built by two local Milwaukee residents.

Another special item that was built for the project was a bike rack designed by Unit Forgings. Unit Forgings is only a short walk from the site, and you can hear the pounding of the forge all over West Allis. As a rich part of West Allis' history, Unit Forgings designed and built a bike rack for the space using spare parts from their factory. Employees of the forge then hand-delivered the bike rack to the site using one of their own fork lifts that they drove down the street.

Lastly, GRG Playscapes, a local natural playground company designed and built a log playscape for the site. Having lived in West Allis previously, the founder, John LaPointe, was excited to be part of the project and graciously built a playscape on-site. After unloading two trucks worth of twisting logs and branches, LaPointe went to work with his chainsaw to cut and position the wood, before anchoring into the concrete.



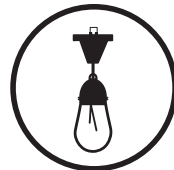
# THE BUILD AND WORKSHOPS



## Build Metrics



70 gallons of paint



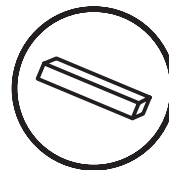
500 feet of string lights



58 Volunteers



10 sheets of plywood



175 1X2s

# Creating Bike Lanes



Creating Bike Lanes







# THE BETTER BLOCK

Neighbors Dancing



# PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

Throughout the Better Block, local artists and businesses participated in programming a weekend of music, food, and activities for all.

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## Friday, September 6, 6-10 PM

### Live Performances

6-10: DAYNC

6-10: Face Painting

8-10: Half Glass Full

### Food Vendors

Taqueria Buenavista

Corvina

Cielito Salvadoreno

West Allis Brewing

### Neighborhood Retail

Face Painting

Rupenas Food

## Saturday, September 7, 11 AM-3 PM

### Live Performances

11-1: Paul Smith and Andy Jehly

11-1: Jim Madristch

1-3: Bahia

1-3: Roxie Bean

### Food Vendors

Taqueria Buenavista

Ay Chihuahua Mexican Coffee

### Neighborhood Retail

Face Painting

Arte de Pilar

Flower Shop

Rupenas Food



Kids Enjoying Playscape



## The Event



### Event Overview

The Burnham Pointe Better Block was successful in building community and showing off the potential of the intersection. Many of the residents stated that this was what they had been wanting to see in the space for a long time, and felt closer to their neighbors.

Many of the residents and businesses expressed their interest in how to make these temporary changes permanent. Beyond the string lights kept by Las Palmas and the pergola that will remain with Buenavista, there were several other lasting elements that will continue to impact Burnham Pointe. The furniture created for the gravel lot and seating area will be reused by the City for future community projects. The

playscape that was designed for the gravel lot will also stay in the area for the neighborhood. Throughout the event, the playscape was used by adults and kids alike, creating a multi-generational play experience for families.

By creating these permanent features, the community will feel safer on a pedestrian scale and will promote more economic development and uses in the area. The Burnham Pointe Better Block was just the first step in improving the area for the future.

# INTERSECTION DETAIL

This is a detail of the intersection at Burnham and 60th. These same changes were made for each corner of the intersection.

Landscaping was used as buffers and to beautify the space. Generously donated by the State Fair, the planters acted as safety measures and added appealing aesthetics.

String lights were used along each corner of the intersection to provide human-scale lighting to the area. This makes the space feel cozier, safer, and more intimate.

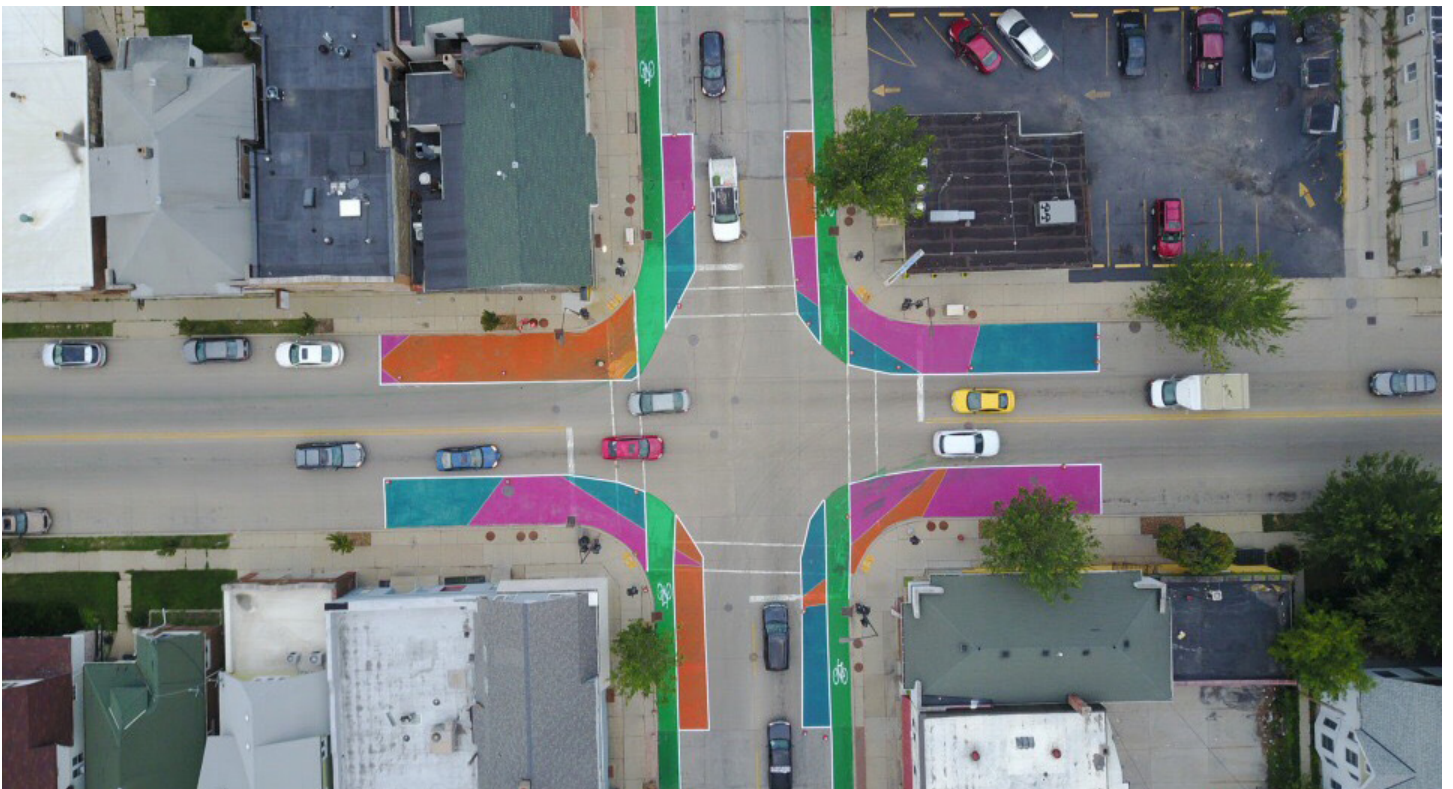
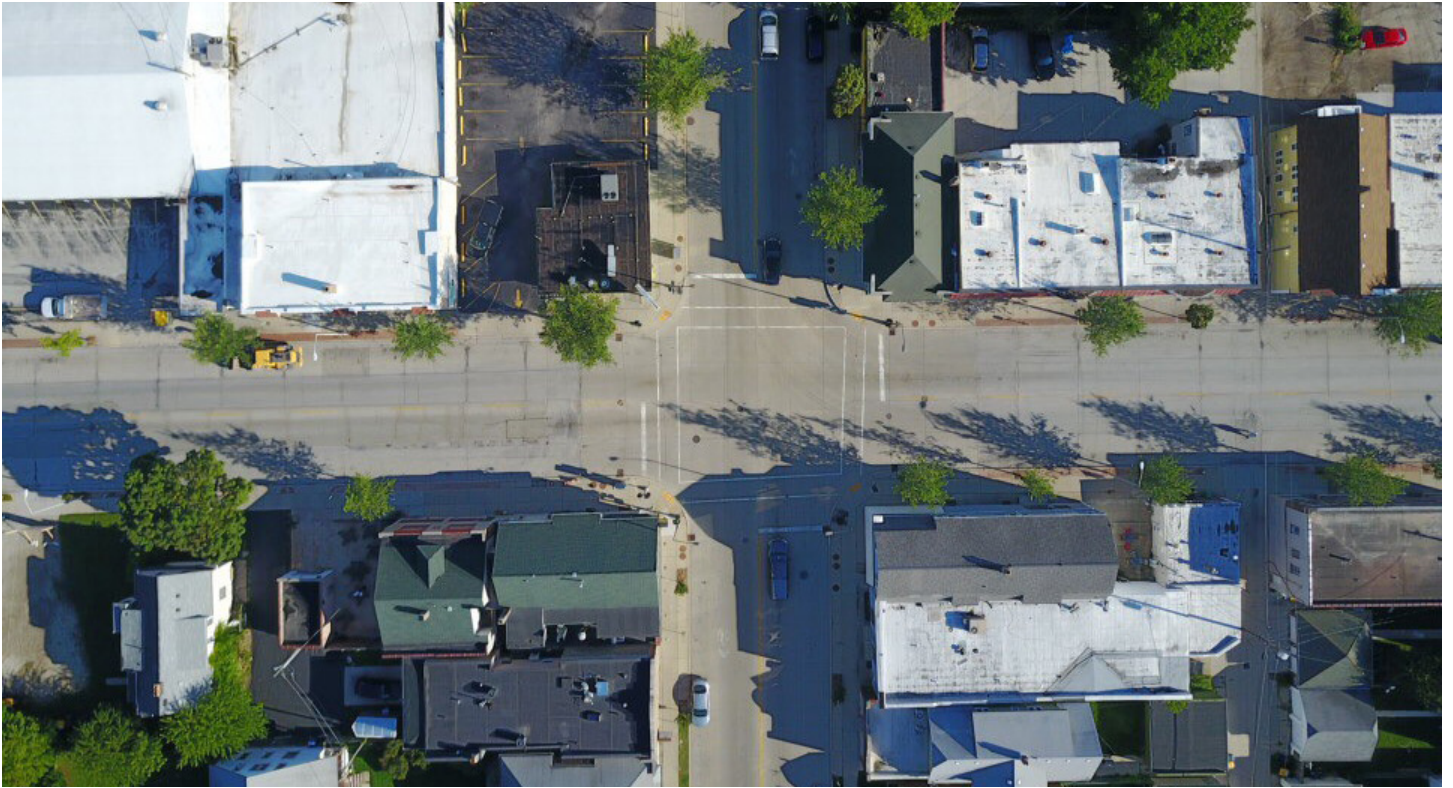
Inside the bump-out there was cafe seating and a bus stop. This provided more pedestrian-friendly areas. The bus stop is on a platform with a ramp leading up to it to make the stop accessible. Bump-outs can also be used as traffic-calming measures.



A seven-foot bump-out on the outside of the bike lane was installed to provide a buffer for pedestrians and cyclists from traffic. By painting in bright colors, the bump-outs became more visible and clearly designated people spaces versus car traffic.

We added a five-foot bike lane against the curb. The intersection, the bike lane made a slight curve to allow for a buffer (planter) to provide safer crossing through the intersection.

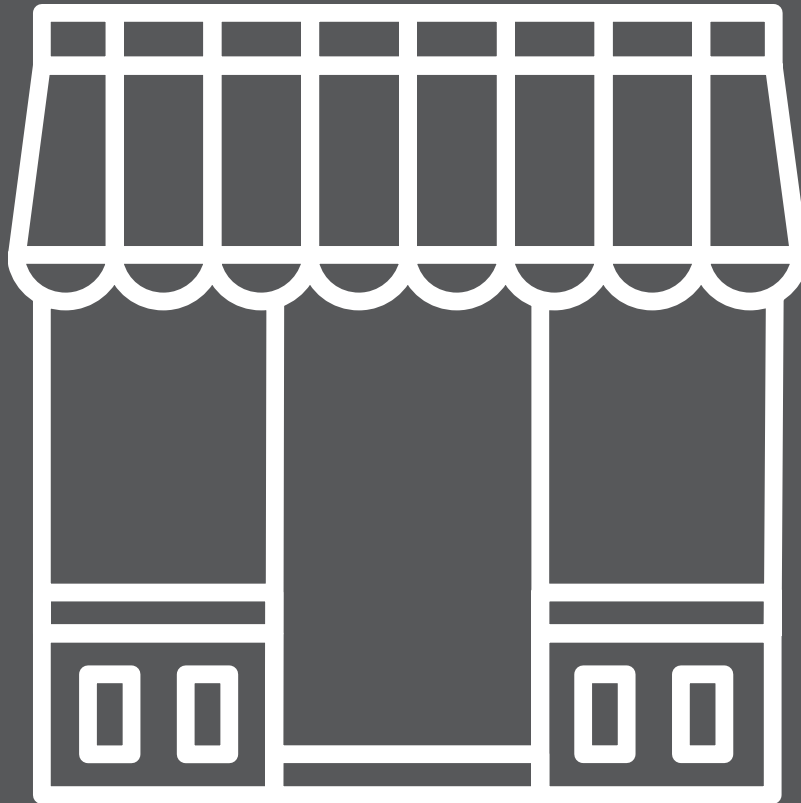
Before and After











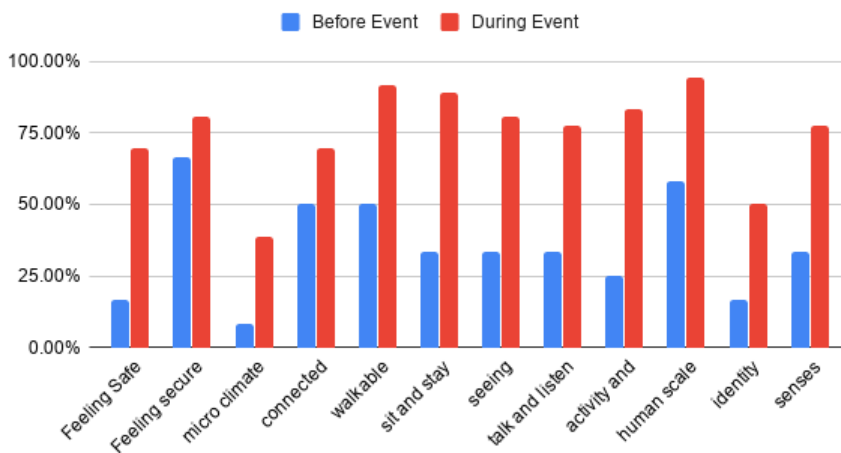
**PROGRESS + STEPS**

# DATA COMPARISON

Data collection was taken before and during the event. Here is a comparison of the of the results.

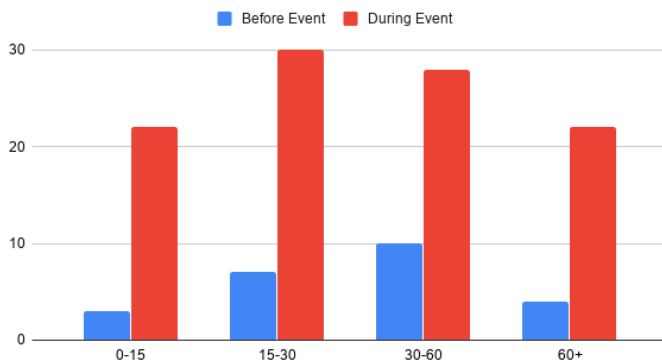
12 Quality Criteria: This data survey is based off how people feel in a space. Having these 12 components are necessary for creating a comfortable and lively space for people. Data was taken before the event, as represented with the blue columns, and during the event, as represented with the red columns. As seen, during the event, people felt safer, more secure, and connected, than they previously felt in the intersection.

12 Quality Criteria

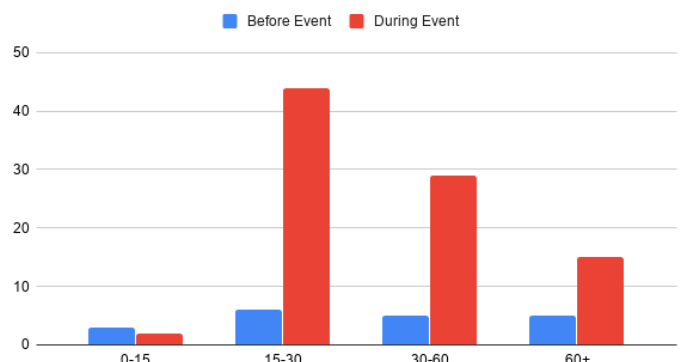


People Count: This data serves as a tally of the amount of people in the space. This data was collected both before and during the event, and there are drastic changes in amounts of people. Noticeably, there are more than double the amount of people in each age range during the event, except for women aged 0 -15. Overall, the amount of people using the space is tremendously more when the space is activated, rather than prior to the event.

Age Count: Men



Age Count: Women

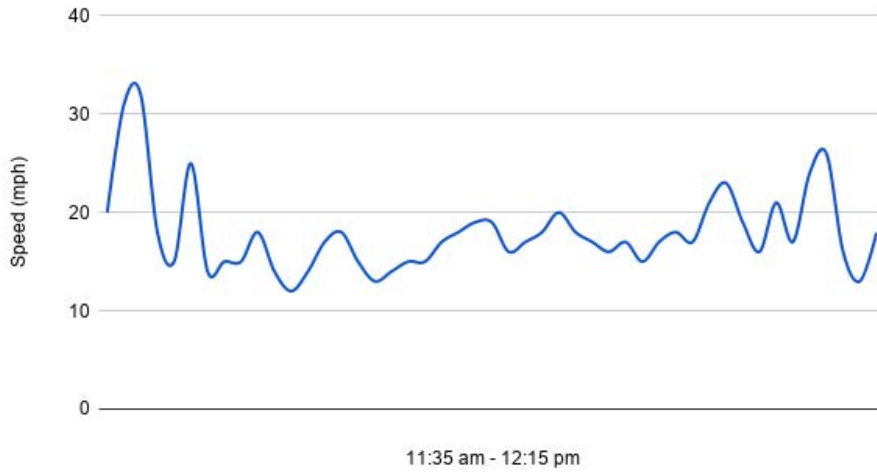


# TRAFFIC DATA

Speed gun data was collected during the event on Saturday, September 7.

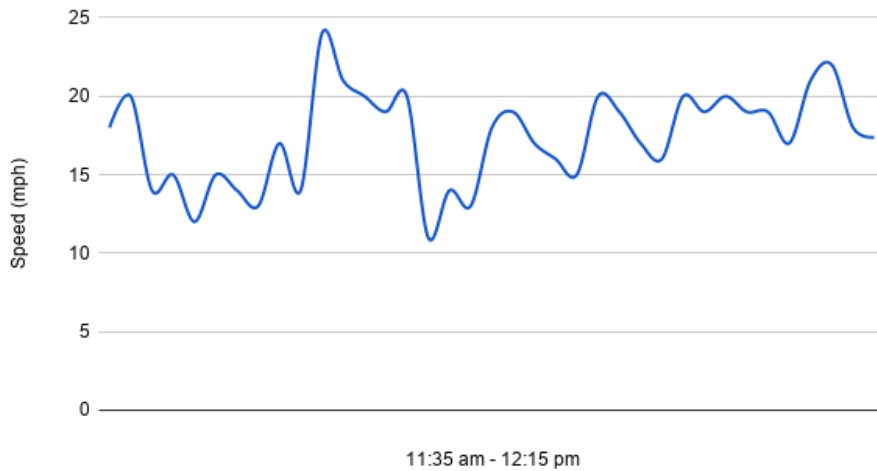
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## 60th Street Traffic Speeds: 9.7.19



Average traffic speed:  
**17.9 mph**

## Burnham Street Traffic Speeds: 9.7.19



Average traffic speed:  
**17.4 mph**

# STEPS FOR THE FUTURE

The Burnham Pointe Better Block provided the foundation for change in the neighborhood. The Better Block helped identify what steps need to be taken to make improvements to the community. Below are our recommendations.

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## **MAD Development**

Create a Merchant Association Development (MAD) to provide programming, administration, maintenance, marketing, and more to the area. This association should manage the city-owned gravel lot and create opportunities for low-maintenance amenities that bring the community together. Additionally, the association should have an online presence that could be used to house a calendar of events, marketing, and more. To give Burnham Pointe a strong identity, the association can also develop a branding campaign to better promote the area and its events.

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## **Invest in Multi-modal Transportation**

In the Better Block event, curb-side bike lanes were painted as well as bump-outs at each corner of the intersection. Moving forward, the curb-side bike lanes should be a permanent feature, since they provide safety to cyclists while still allowing for on-street parking. Additionally, the bump-outs do slow traffic speeds, a complaint among residents from previous surveys, and can be utilized permanently. Using just paint, bump-outs along the right turn lanes would still lower speeds and provide programming space in front of businesses. While the bump-outs alongside the bus stop need to be thought through a bit more, the space that bump-outs provide businesses could be utilized by the owners.

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## **Reward Local**

The local business owners played a big part in the success of the Burnham Pointe Better Block. Their willingness and excitement should be utilized moving forward to make lasting changes to the area. The City's Economic Development office should work with the neighborhood to create an incentive program for facade updates for the businesses. The City should also require that with the facade improvements, there needs to be permeability of ground-floor commercial businesses. Particularly the yellow corner building should be opened and brightened up. The City should work to create a cohesive AM and PM presence in Burnham Pointe, meaning that there should be continuous activation in the mornings and evenings. Identify the spaces that are creating holes in the intersection's activation and work with property or business owners to find solutions. One way to provide a strong evening presence would be to allow for food to be sold with beer and wine. Buenavista Taqueria wants to sell margaritas. By allowing them, or easing the process of getting a permit, this will provide a place for adults to eat and drink, without adding another bar to the area.

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## Small Improvements Add Up

During the Burnham Pointe Better Block, we heard lots of positive feedback through each of our interventions. Though each piece was small, when combined, they provided a big impact on the intersection. By making these small changes through bump-outs, cafe seating, landscaping, and string lighting, it made a drastic change on the intersection and how it was perceived. Moving forward, continue to make these small changes by making lighting permanent and introducing more landscaping. This will help freshen and brighten the look of the space.

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## Community Gathering

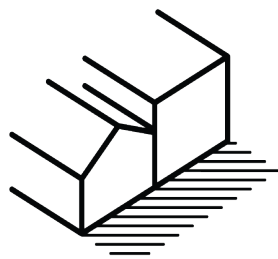
Burnham Pointe needs spaces designed for community gathering. One of the spaces most utilized during the event, and requested prior, was a play area and meeting space. By meeting that need in the City-owned gravel lot, the residents of Burnham Pointe were able to have a place to gather outside of restaurants and business centric places. The gathering space offers the community a place to come together, interact with each other, and make connections. Additional to the MAD, there are benefits in providing a storage container on site to house plaza amenities such as planters, benches, seating, etc., as well as doubling as a kiosk or vendor space for the area. This lot can be a destination point for the area, and meet a need for the residents of the community.



A man with dark hair and a beard is seen from the back, wearing a purple jacket. The jacket features a logo for 'Better Blocks' on the back, which consists of the text 'Better Blocks' in white, bold, sans-serif font, enclosed in a colorful border of rectangular blocks in shades of orange, yellow, green, and blue. Below the logo, the slogan 'Bring our street to life!' is printed in a white, italicized font. The man is standing outdoors at what appears to be a community event or festival. In the background, there are wooden lattice structures, string lights, and a white building with a white roof. A green van and a dark car are parked in the distance. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

**Better Blocks**

*Bring our street to life!*



**BETTER BLOCK**