**Just Spaces**: University City District’s early thoughts about new ways of understanding, creating, and operating public spaces
UCD Public Spaces and Social Seating

Map showing various public spaces and social seating areas in the West Powelton area, including:

1. The Porch
2. Parklets
3. Market Street Bridge
4. Trolley Portal Gardens
5. Woodland Green & Looped In
6. Bus Seats
7. Tree Seats
8. Pedestrian Plazas
The Porch @ 30th Street Station
What do we know about our spaces?
What don’t we know about our public spaces?

Who is not in this public space?

Why aren’t they here?
EQUALITY

EQUITY
What do we mean when we say justice?

Major domains of justice for public space
(Setha Low 2016)

Distributive - who has *physical proximity* to space assets?
Procedural who is listened to and how are they listened to in the planning, design and operations of a public space?

What do we mean when we say justice?
What do we mean when we say justice?

**Interactional** - What makes people feel *welcome* or *unwanted* in a public space?
NO UNATTENDED KIDS ON A SIDEWALK
Just Spaces – Why it matters

Moral imperative

Organizational opportunity

Professional obligation
Just Spaces Advisory Group
Favorite of Caucasian respondents
“When I moved here I was like wow Clark Park is like the public space that I've always been talking about. It just exists, magically.”

“[It’s for] the whole neighborhood: Older people, younger people, families, people that aren't families, people of different ethnicity, backgrounds, everybody's there. It would be like, seven different languages on the playground”

Also a favorite of younger African American’s but not a universally positive experience.
“I grew up around there all my life and every year we would get to Woodland Avenue reunion, and for the past 4 years they kept telling us that we can't use the power, we can't do this, we got to use just this amount of space, and actually we can't have it there anymore. This festival has been here for 20 years, and that was last year in 2017. Park ain’t for us anymore.”

“I play basketball down there a lot. A couple of times, the rim got broken. I never saw anybody from Clark Park committee come out and try to fix the ring. We had to come and bring our own ring, and put it up there and replace the ring. The committee doesn’t want us there.”
Just Spaces – What we are doing

• Share perspectives on justice in public spaces by listening to different voices

• Create clearer ways of thinking about justice in public space

• Foster a community of practice
Just Spaces – What we are doing

• Create an audit tool for public space owners and managers

• Evaluate our own work

• Develop interventions to make our places more just
Sometimes public space is a reflection of societal structures of inequality, racism, sexism, ableism, etc, sometimes it is a refuge from these structures. Who decides when it’s what? If to intervene? How to intervene?

Is a park ‘better’ if it’s seen as having a perceived owner, or ‘better’ if it’s seen as owned by everybody/nobody?

What’s the best way to collect data and that can become actionable information?

There are a lot of neighborhoods/park users who are looking for a way to become more engaged— how can community energy be harnessed without using that energy for exclusion?