



Key Findings for Public Life

1 Lots of people are moving through Civic Center

In 2016 there were:

15,120
weddings at City Hall

268,800
people visiting Davies Symphony Hall

14,148
people on City Hall tours

269,261
people visiting the Opera House

44,240
people living in the district

1.7 million
visiting the Main Library

850,000
people celebrating PRIDE
(600-850k estimated
over 2 days)



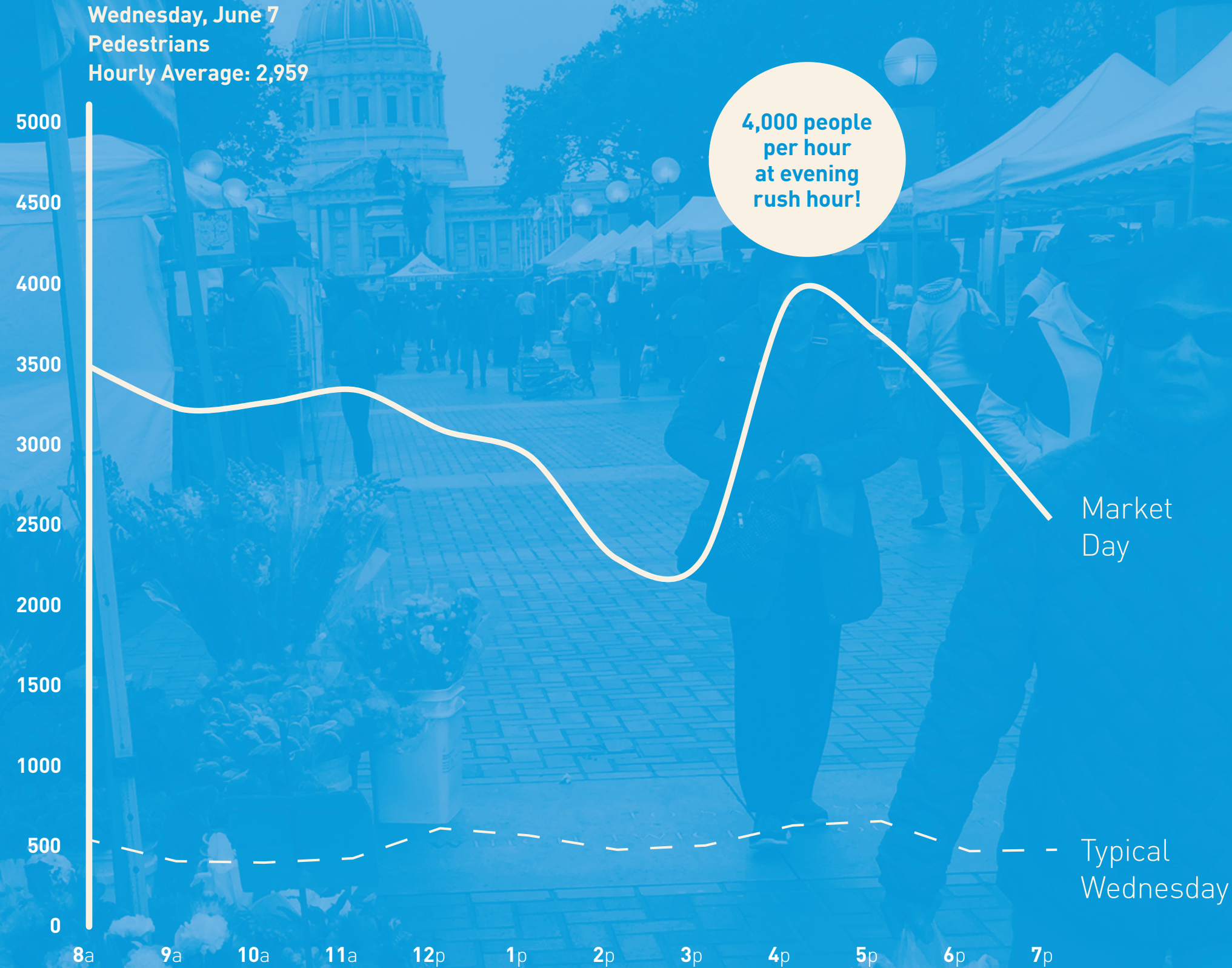
Special-event activation

Dozens of permits are distributed each year that include large special events that program the entire space like SF Pride, and small events that activate Civic Center Plaza three times a week during a season like America Scores Soccer and food trucks.



There are some outstanding peaks

The Heart of the City Farmers Market in UN Plaza is one of the largest in the city.



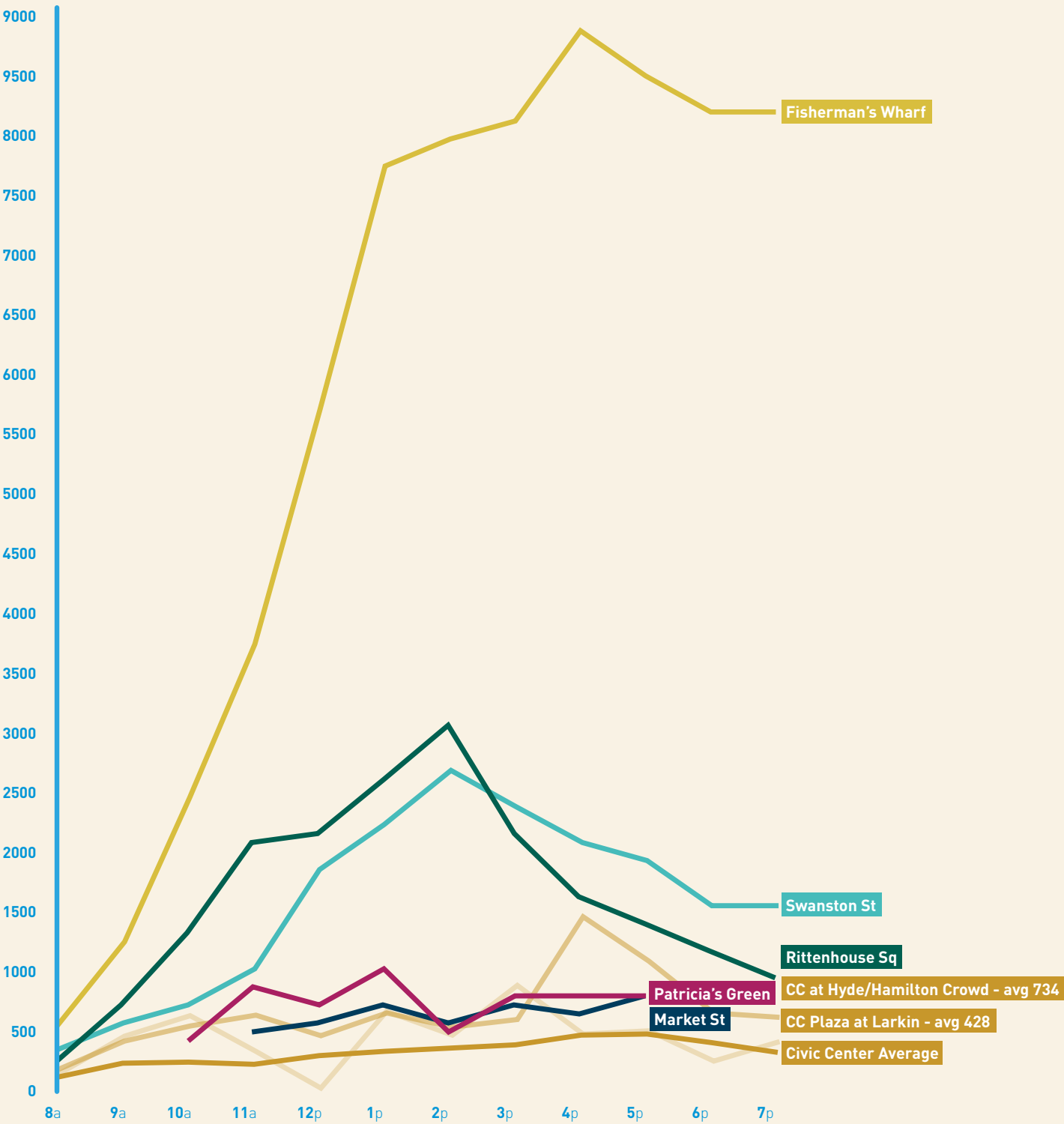
The existing public life makes for some of the best people-watching in San Francisco.



Still, overall numbers of people moving are **relatively low**

Average Pedestrians Moving per Hour on the Weekend

Average Pedestrians Moving per Hour



5972_(avg/hr)
Fisherman's Wharf
Summer Weekend

1621_(avg/hr)
Rittenhouse Sq
Philadelphia
Fall Weekend

1565_(avg/hr)
Swanston St
Melbourne
Summer Weekend

713_(avg/hr)
Patricia's Green
Spring Weekend

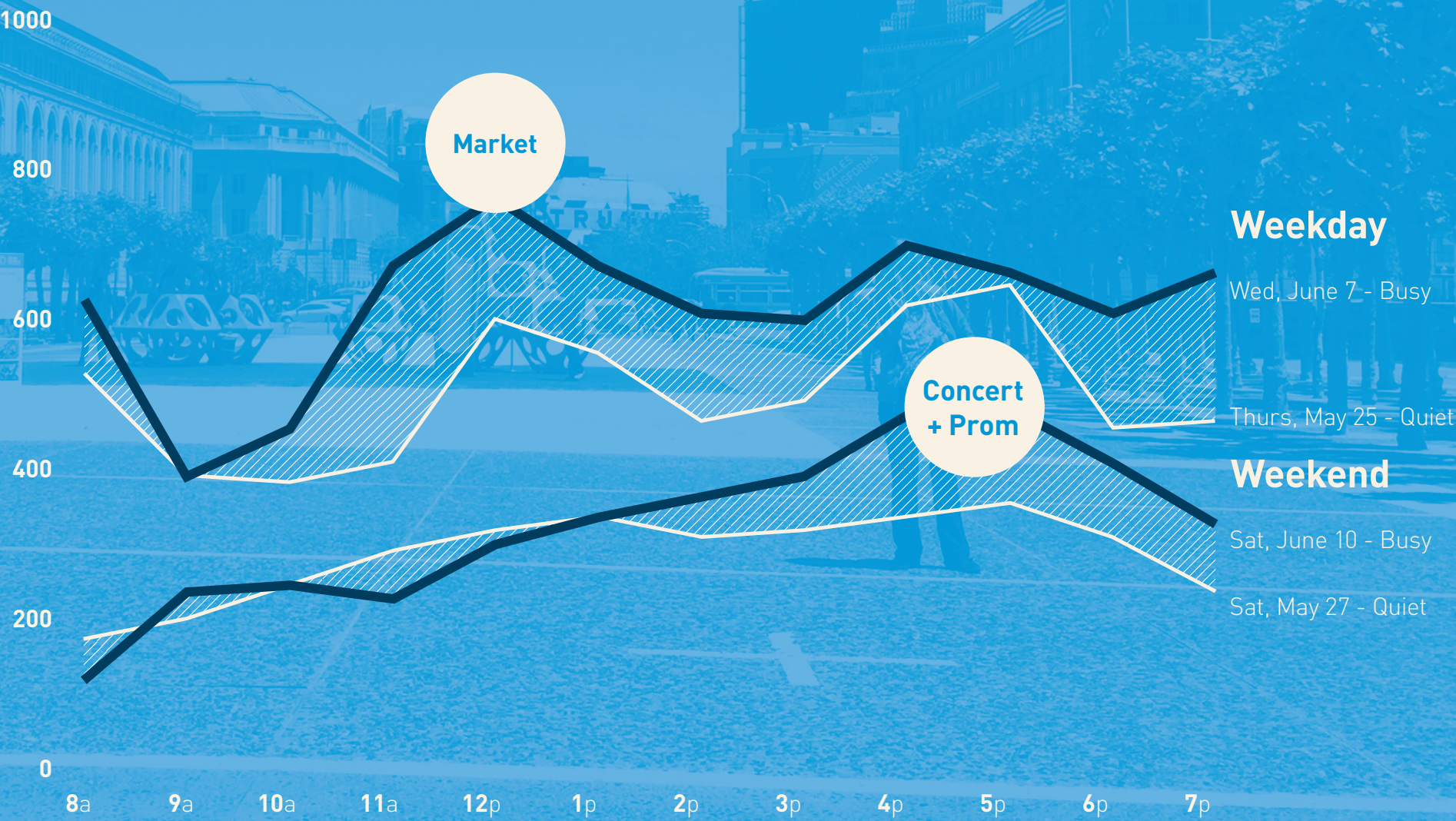
619_(avg/hr)
Market St
(@ Polk)
Spring Weekend

285_(avg/hr)
Civic Center
Summer Weekend

A normal weekday is busier than a 'busy' weekend

This pattern of public life tells us that people don't choose to come here in their free time.

Average Pedestrian Counts



Average number of people walking on a street in the Civic Center District, by hour

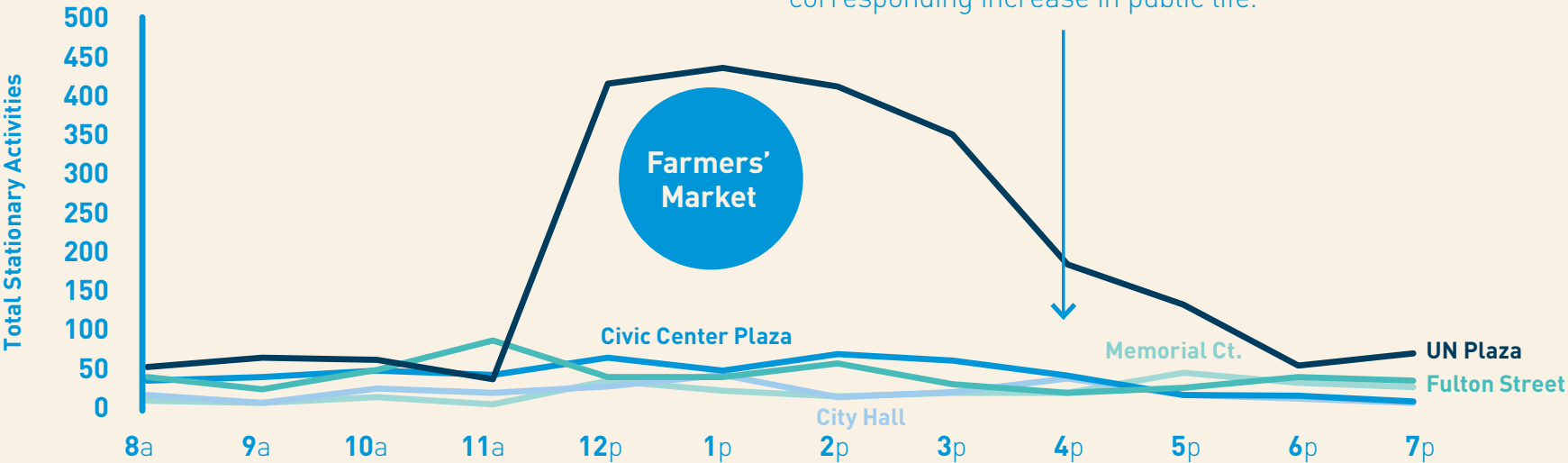
2 Peaks in activity do not generate 'spillover' impacts

There are lots of people coming to the market - but they don't explore or stay longer

In a connected public realm network we might expect to see all public spaces in the District following a similar pattern of activity. In Civic Center, events do not tend to spill over into adjacent spaces.



Busy Weekday

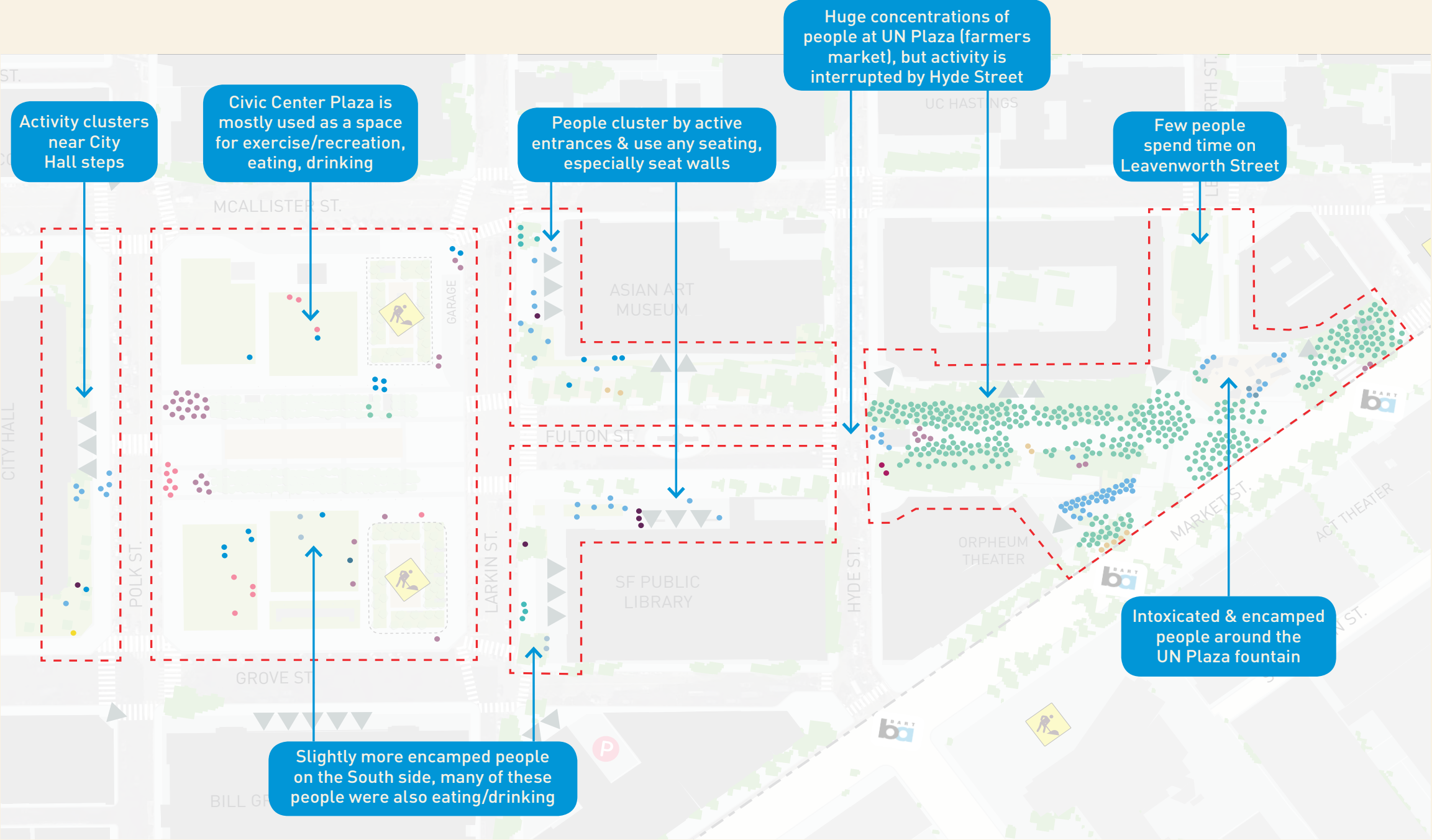


Spaces do not function as one

Even during big, regular events like the Farmers Market, activity in one space does not flow to adjacent spaces.

Spaces with seating, shade, active ground floors and entrances, interesting buildings, and other human-scaled elements invite more people to spend time, such as near Asian Art Museum entrance.

Stationary activity mapping
Date: 06-07-2017
Time: 12:00pm



Activities

- One dot = One person
- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| ● Civic Work | ● Eating/Drinking | ● Cultural/Performance | ● Passive Recreation | ● Hard Drugs/Intoxicated |
| ● Exercise/Play/Recreation | ● Commerce | ● Waiting for Transport | ● Accompanied by Pets | ● Encamped |
| ● Sleeping | ● Political/Religious Advocacy | ● Smoking | | |

Pedestrian Tracing

Findings

- Latent desire for diagonal movement across Civic Center Plaza
- Given East/West configuration of the Plaza there is a surprising amount of North/ South movement and diagonal movement that is not supported by the current design.
- Jaywalking across Larkin Street

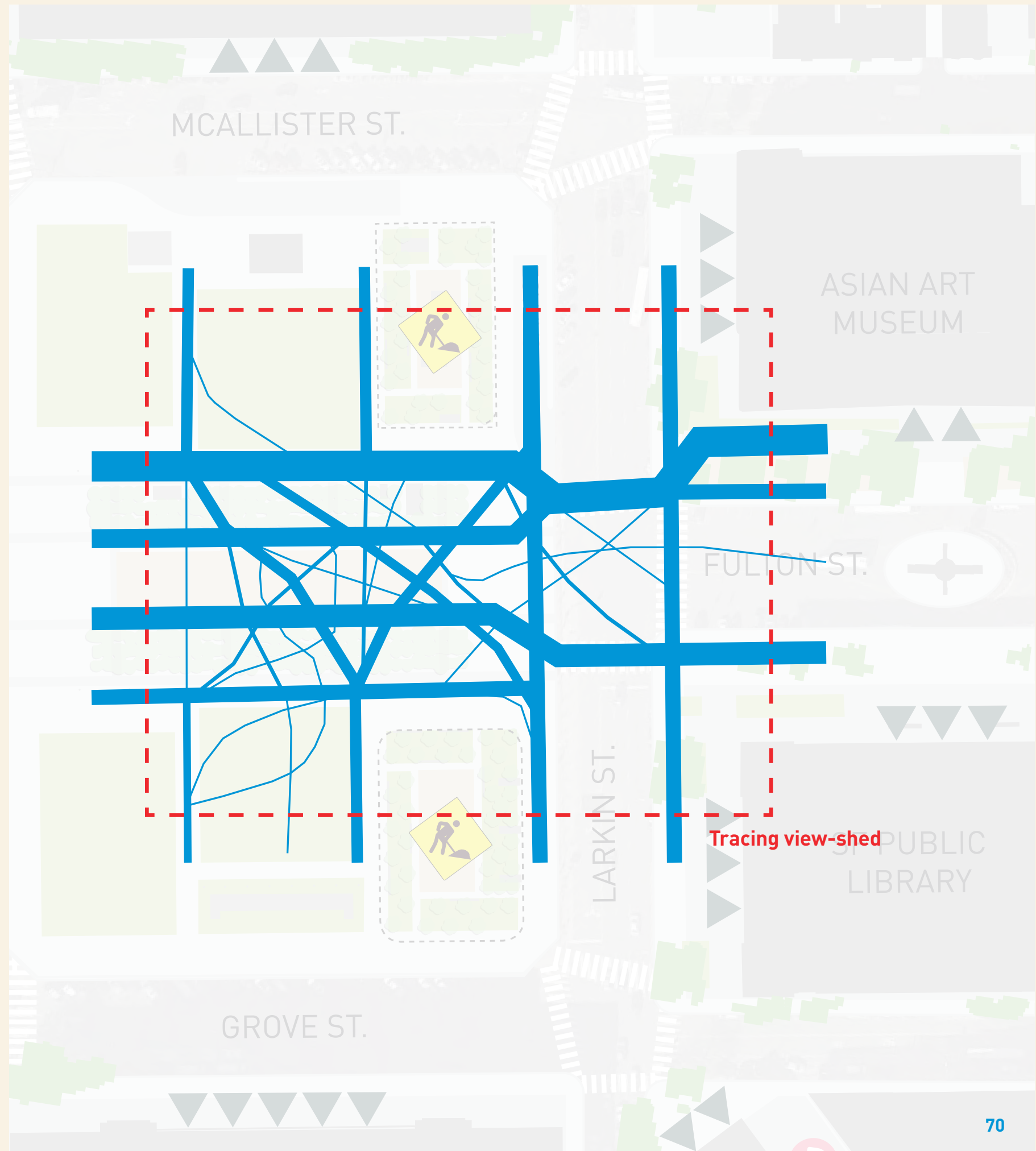
Pedestrian movement tracing

Date: 05-26-2017

Time: Morning commute

- 6:00am - 10:00am

Observed via timelapse camera mounted on City Hall dome with narrow view.



A City Hall wedding is an SF tradition!

Each year there are over 15,000 weddings that take place at City Hall - That's about 41 every day!

...But this generates little activity in Civic Center Plaza



Happy wedding!

City Hall steps are doing double-duty.

Happy Graduation!



Fighting traffic in my wedding gown isn't exactly what I pictured

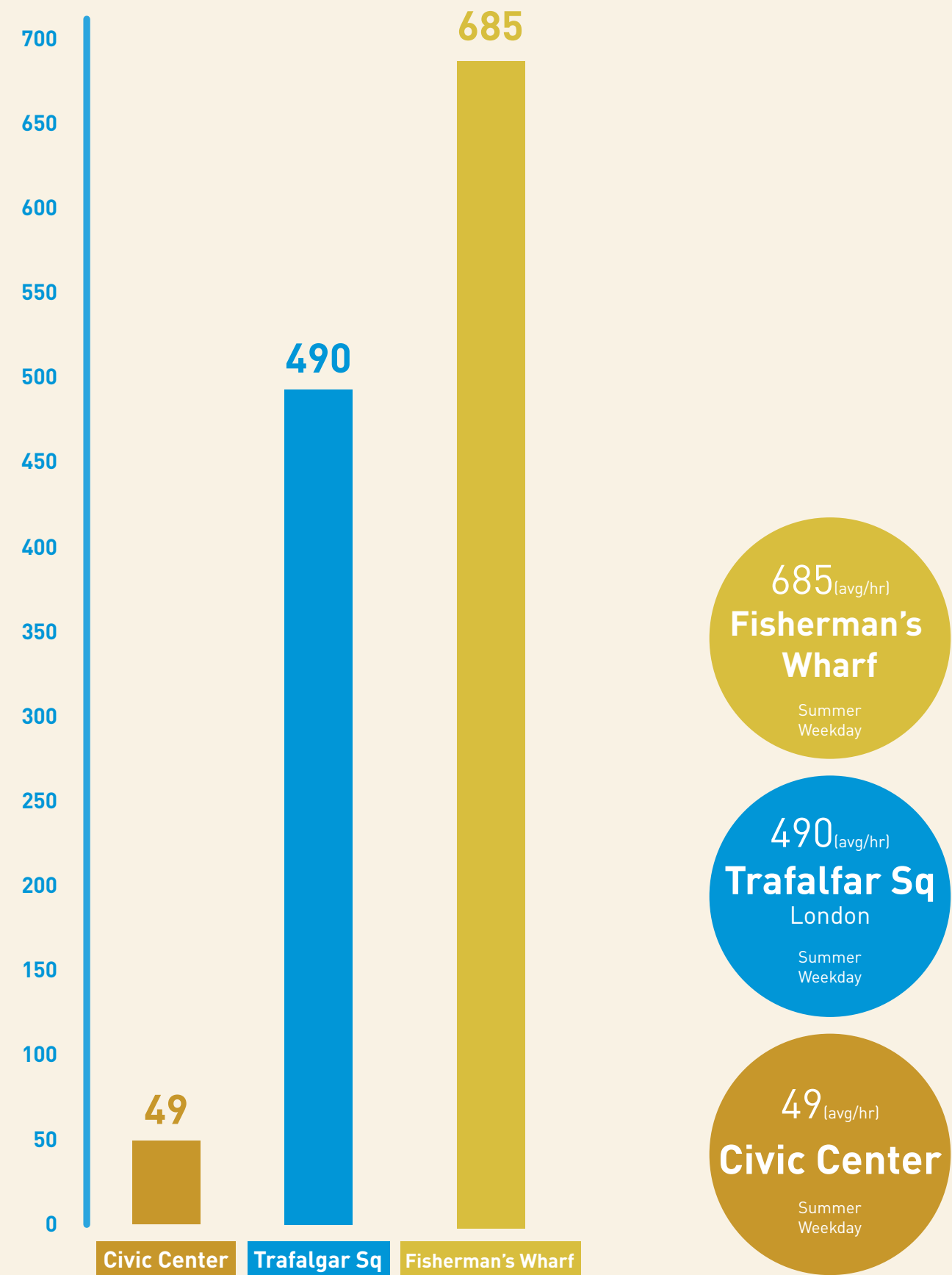


Not many photo-ops in Civic Center Plaza!

3 Few people choose to spend time in Civic Center

Overall stationary activity numbers are relatively **low**

Average People Staying per Hour on a Weekday



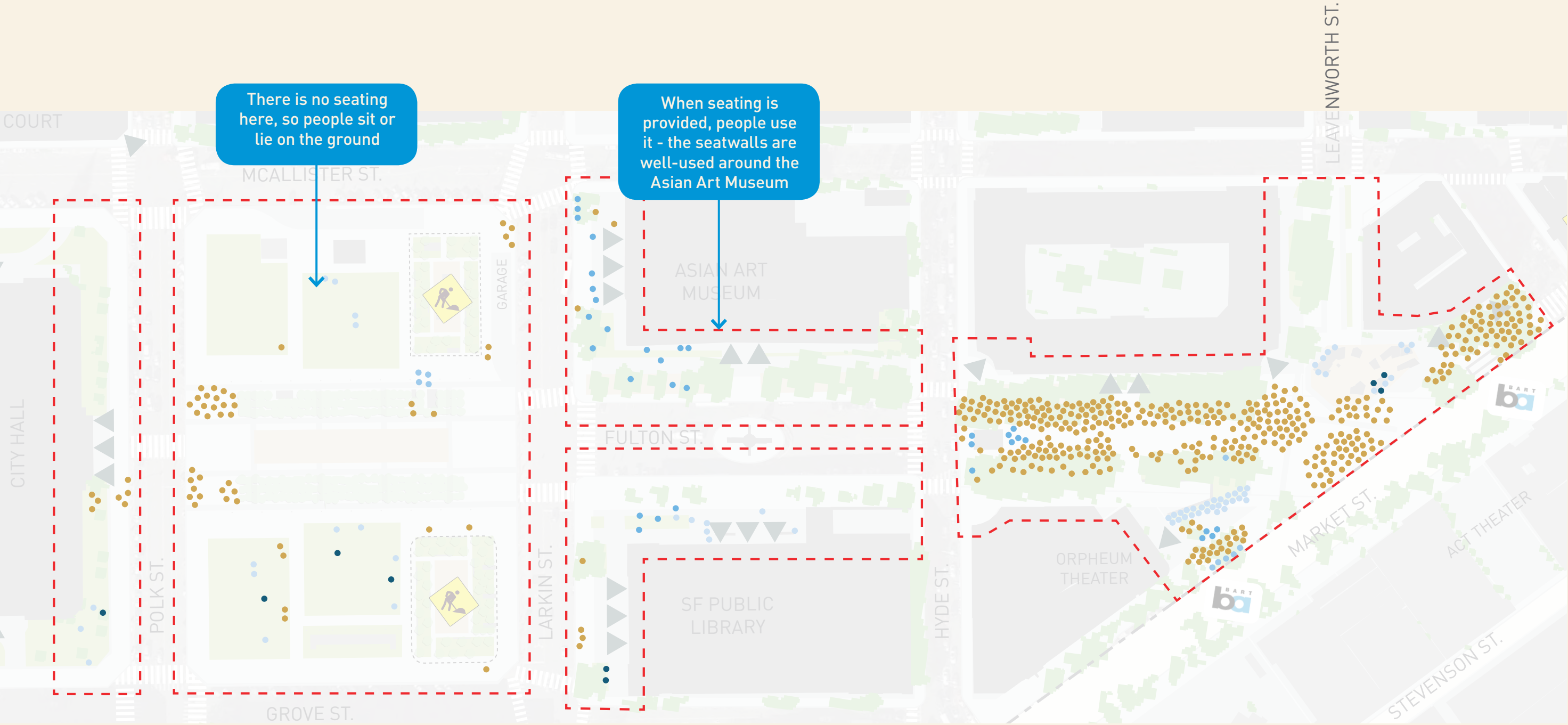
67%

of people were **standing**

When there are few places to sit, people can only stand, or they do not come at all. Healthy public spaces allow approximately 50% of all people spending time to sit. If there were more generous invitations to spend time, would more people spend time in Civic Center?

22%

of people were **sitting on an improvised seat**



People sit on seats when they are provided

Most people in Civic Center are standing. They sit wherever there is an invitation - like on the seatwalls around the Asian Art Museum and Library. Movable tables + chairs not present during study.

Stationary activity mapping
Date: 06-07-2017
Time: 12:00pm

Postures

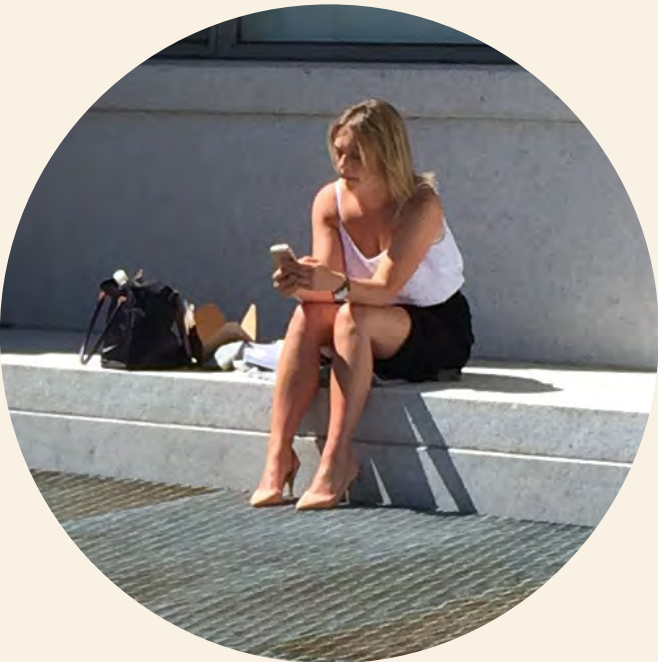
- Standing
- Sitting - Improvised
- Sitting - Private/Cafe
- Sitting - Public Seating
- Lying

One dot = One person

An ode to improvised seating

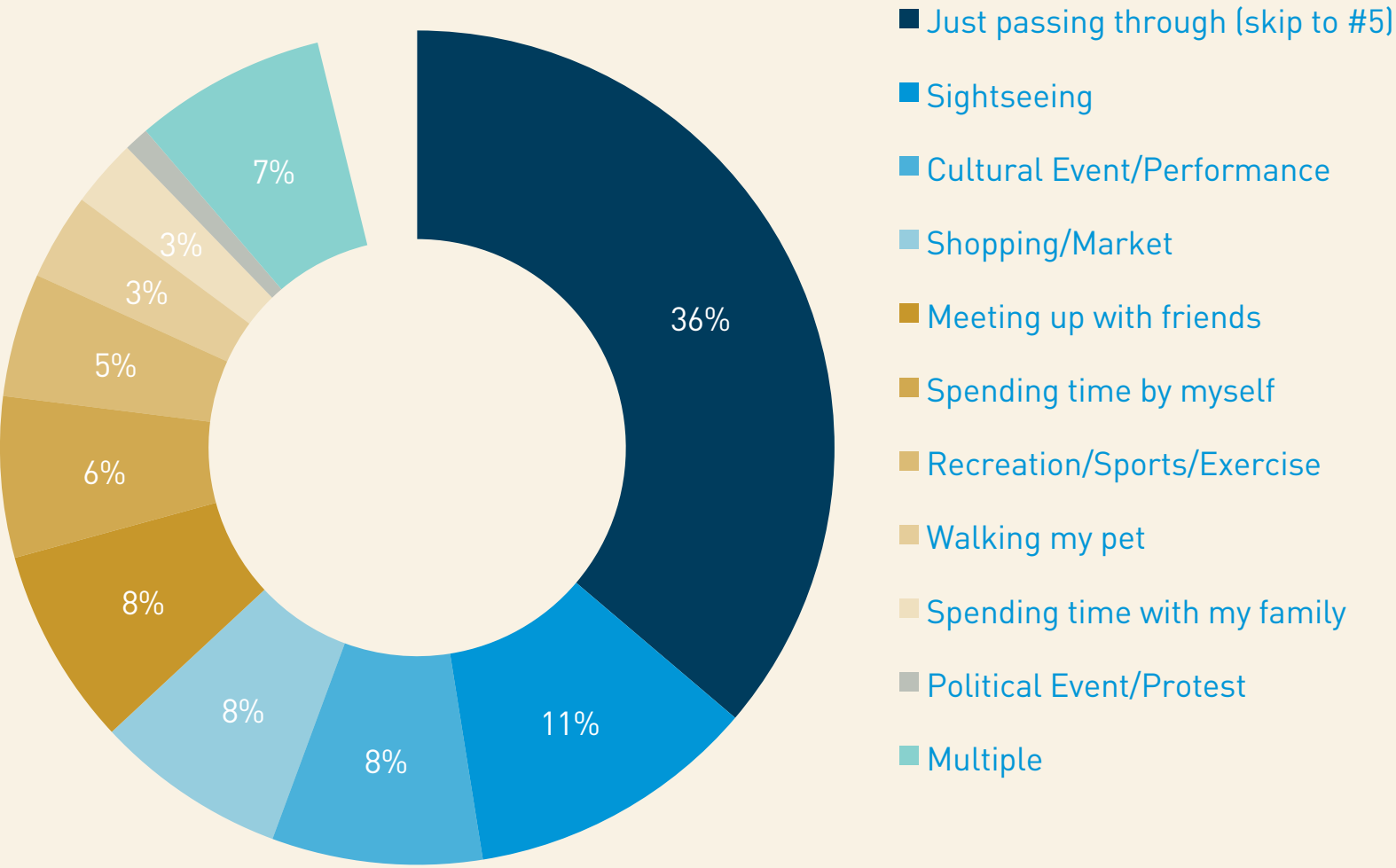
Improvvised seating is part of the delight of city life - finding your own space within a space is part of a human-scaled city. However, when informal seating is the only available seating option many people - especially older people - will not choose to come to this space.

Civic Center has a lot of improvised sitting - how can we make more formal invitations to spend time?



36% of people are just passing through

What brings you to the space today?

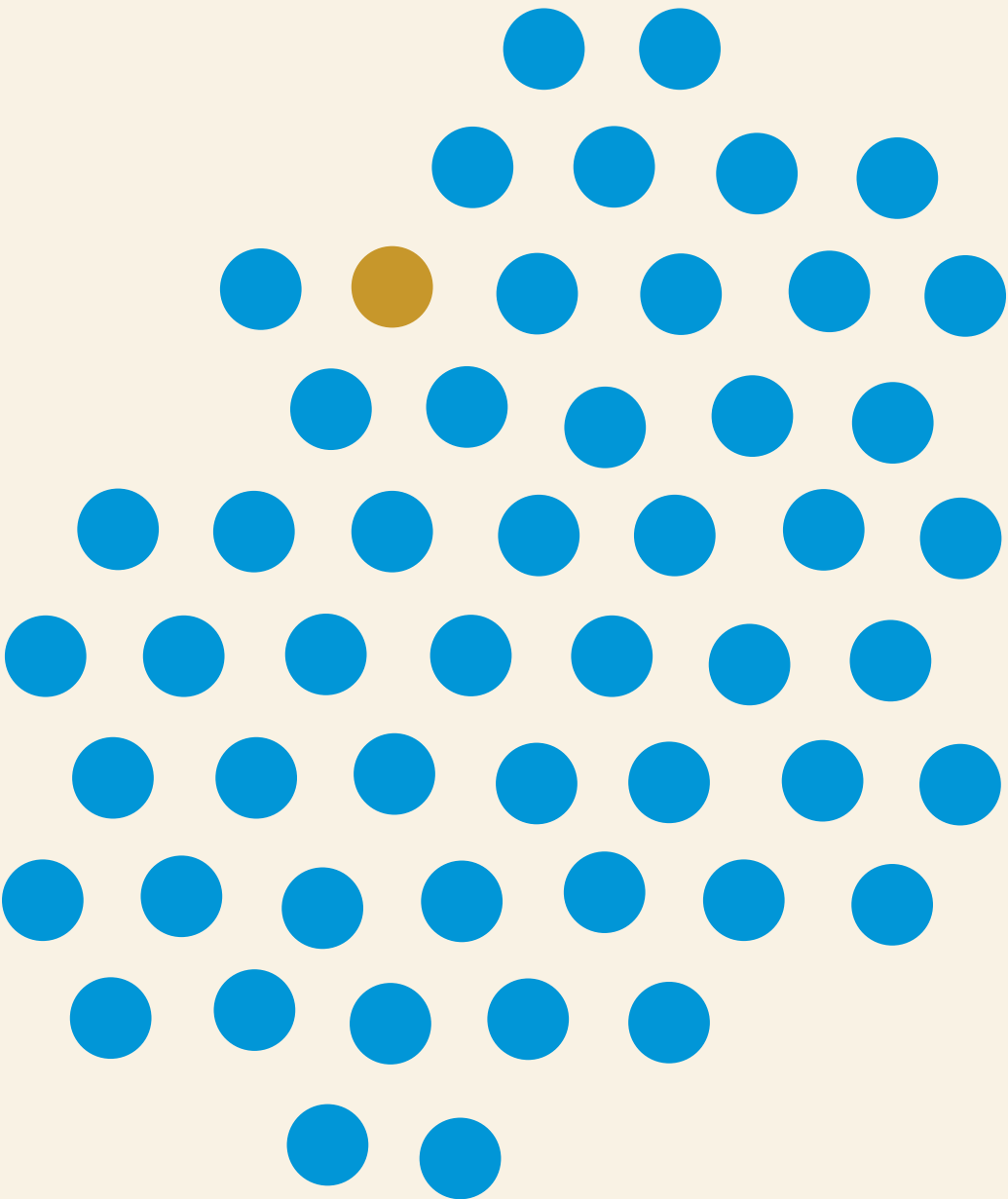


*Intercept Survey

Few people choose to stay

Civic Center has relatively few people moving through the space compared to similar sites. Compounding this emptiness, only a small fraction of those moving through decided to stop and stay.

“Stickiness” is a measure of how many people are spending time in a space, compared to who is moving through. A “sticky” space that encourages people to spend time often has a healthy public life profile.



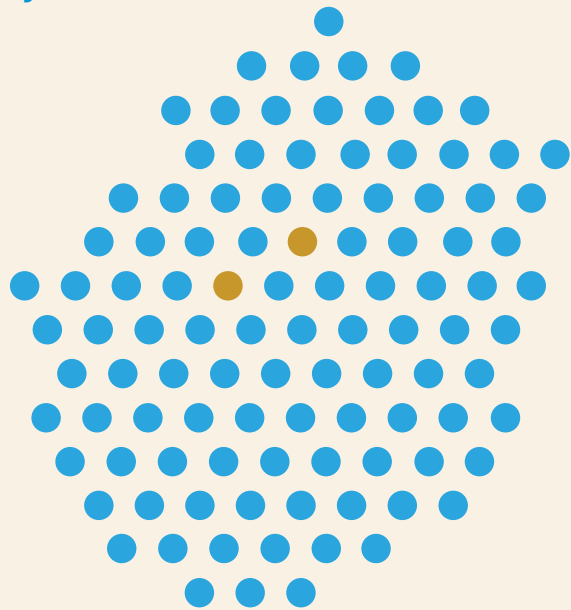
Out of 44 people moving through Civic Center, **only 1 stays.**

'Stickiness' compared

Civic Center holds the potential to be the vibrant heart of San Francisco it was envisioned to be. In order to support the type of public life found in other vibrant spaces, the area will need many more invitations for people to stay.

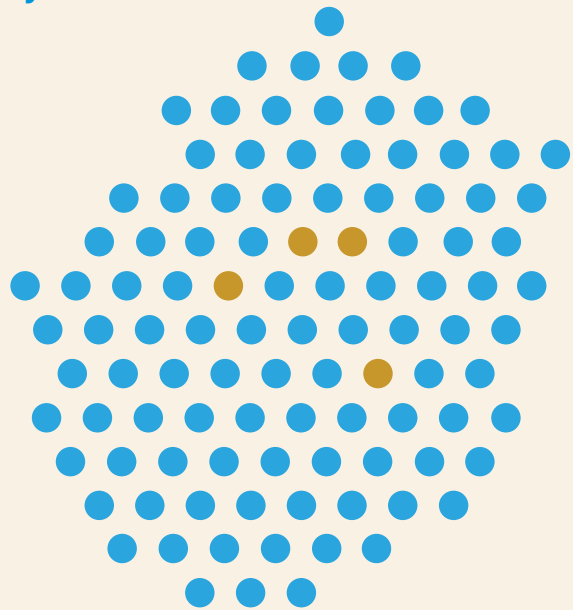
Civic Center Weekdays

—
Out of every 55 passers by,
1 stays



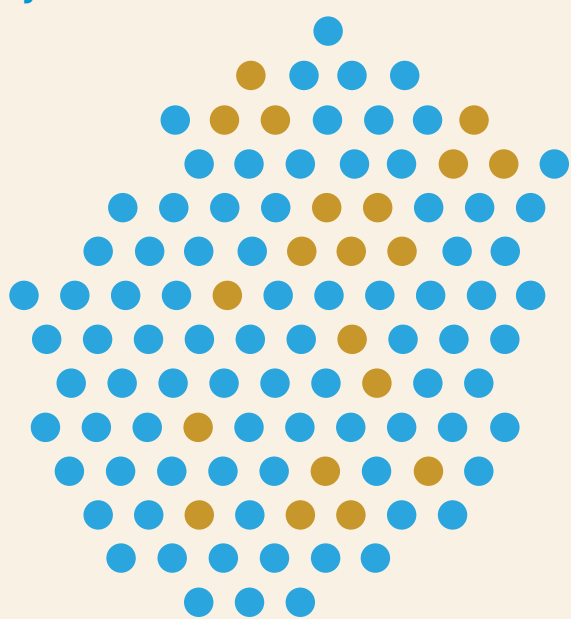
Civic Center Weekends

—
Out of every 28 passers by,
1 stays



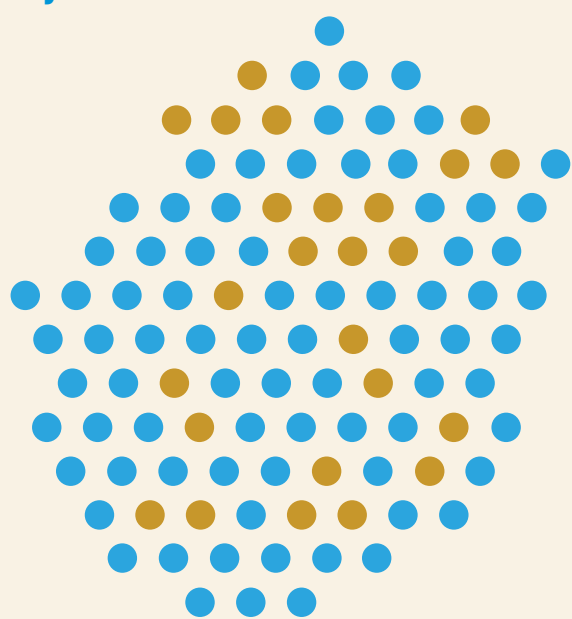
In Times Square, NY

—
Out of every 5 passers by,
1 stays



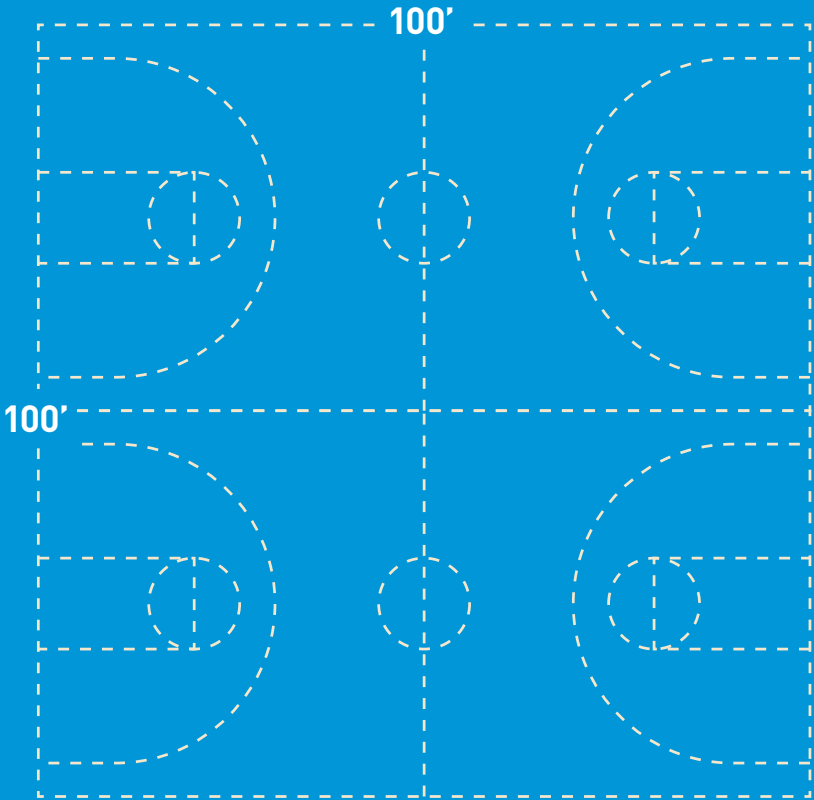
On Swanston Street, Melbourne

—
Out of every 4 passers by,
1 stays

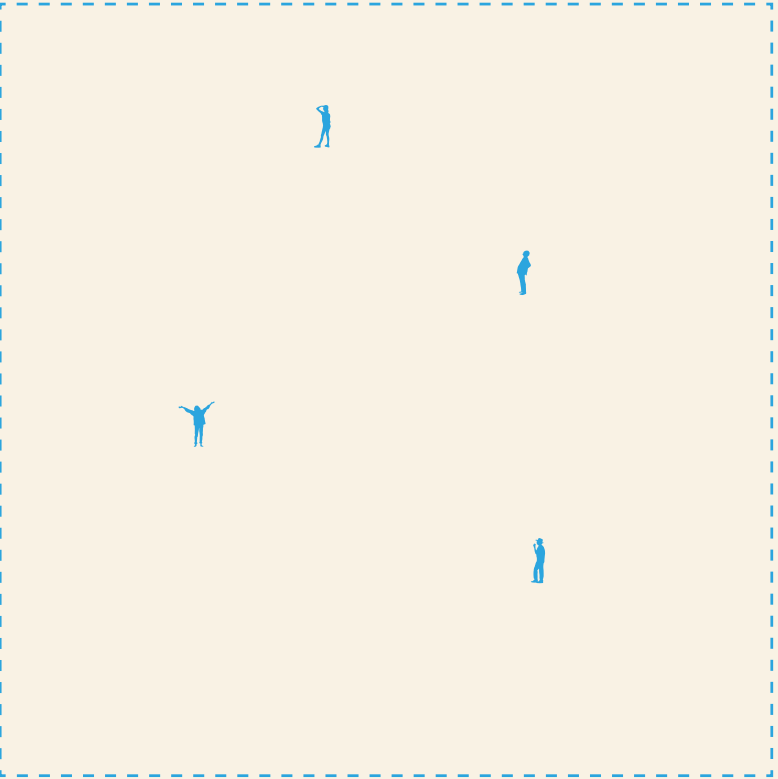


On a non-event day, Civic Center feels empty, compared to places around the corner and around the world

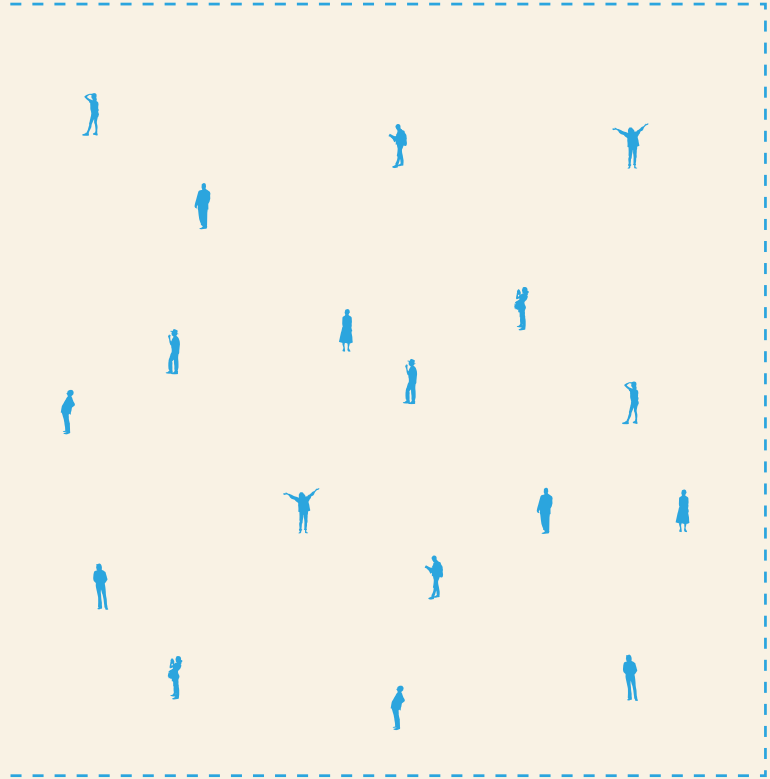
Scale comparison: two basketball courts



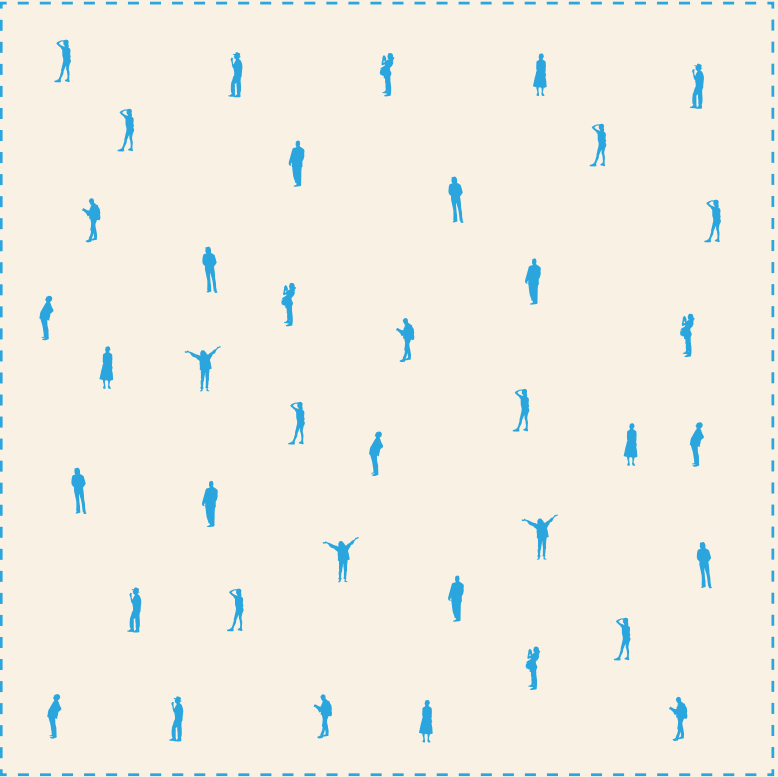
Civic Center ~ 4 per 10ksf



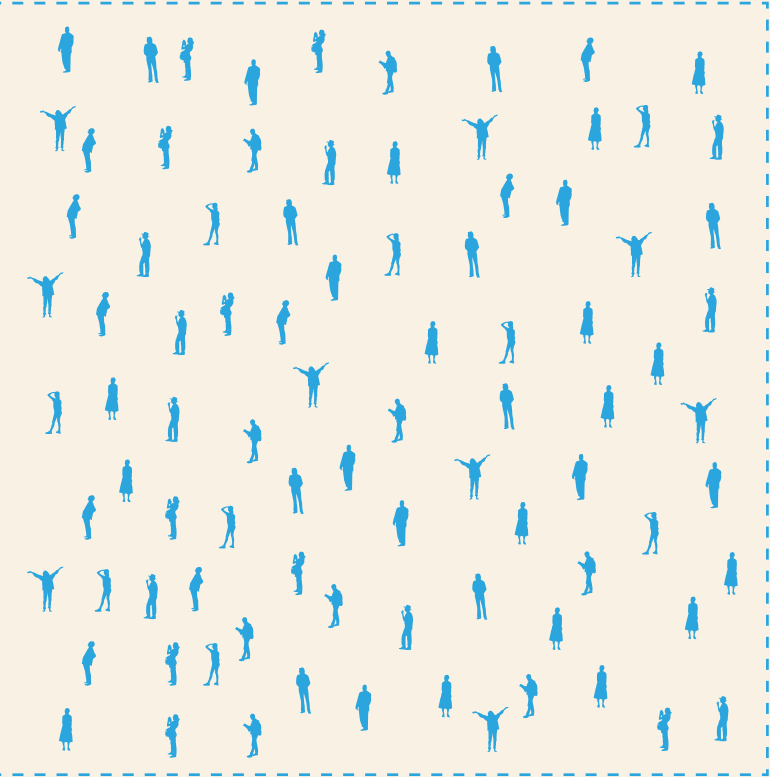
Patricia's Green ~ 18 per 10ksf



Trafalgar Square ~ 39 per 10ksf

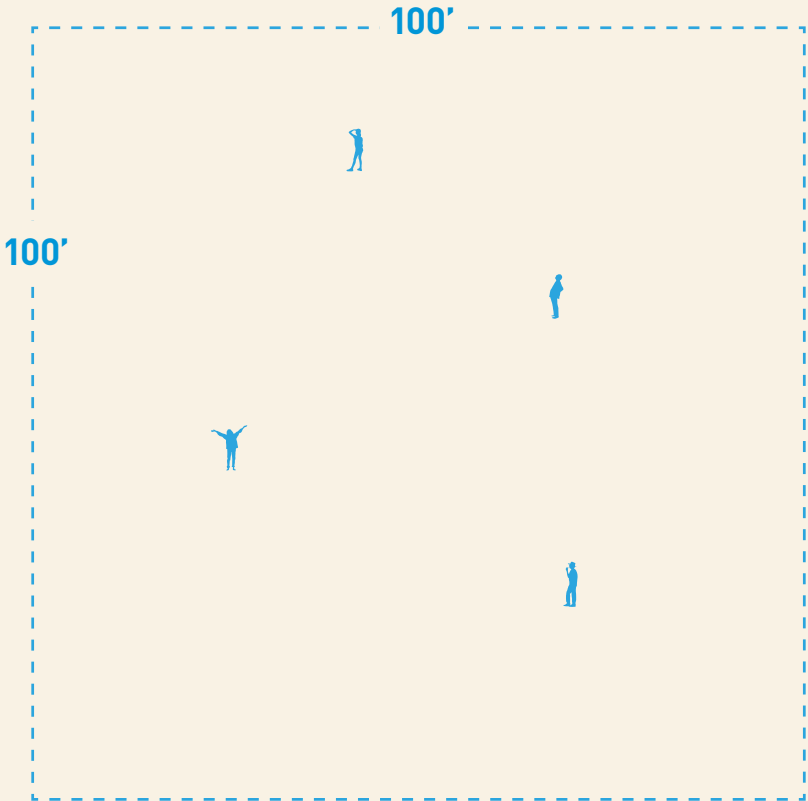


Pier 39 ~ 88 per 10ksf

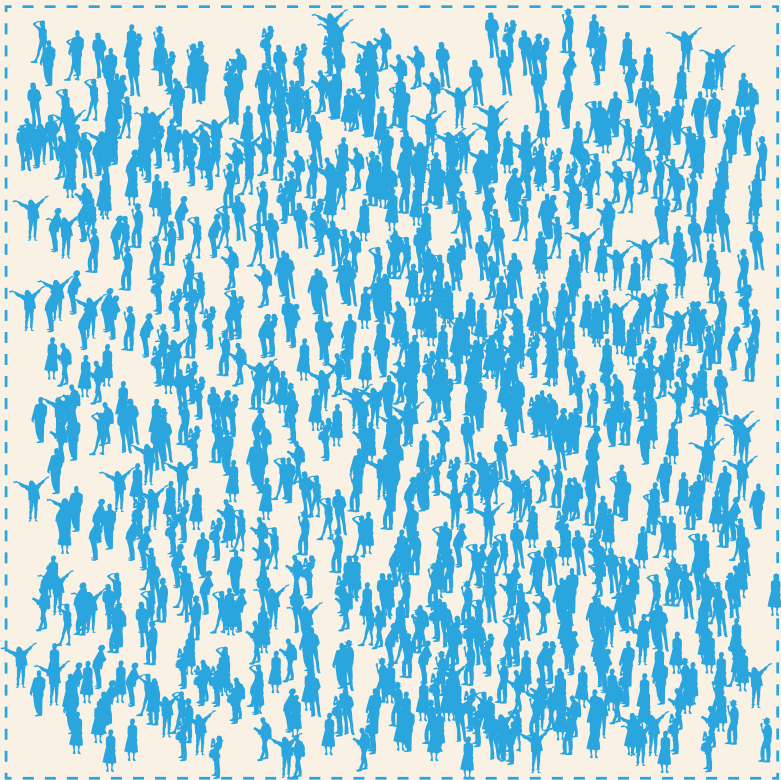


The design works well a few times per year

Average Weekday
~ 4 per 10ksf



Major Civic Event
~ 1,000 per 10ksf *



* estimate of density

The design works well a few times per year

– and when actively programmed



Watching the Warriors in Civic Center



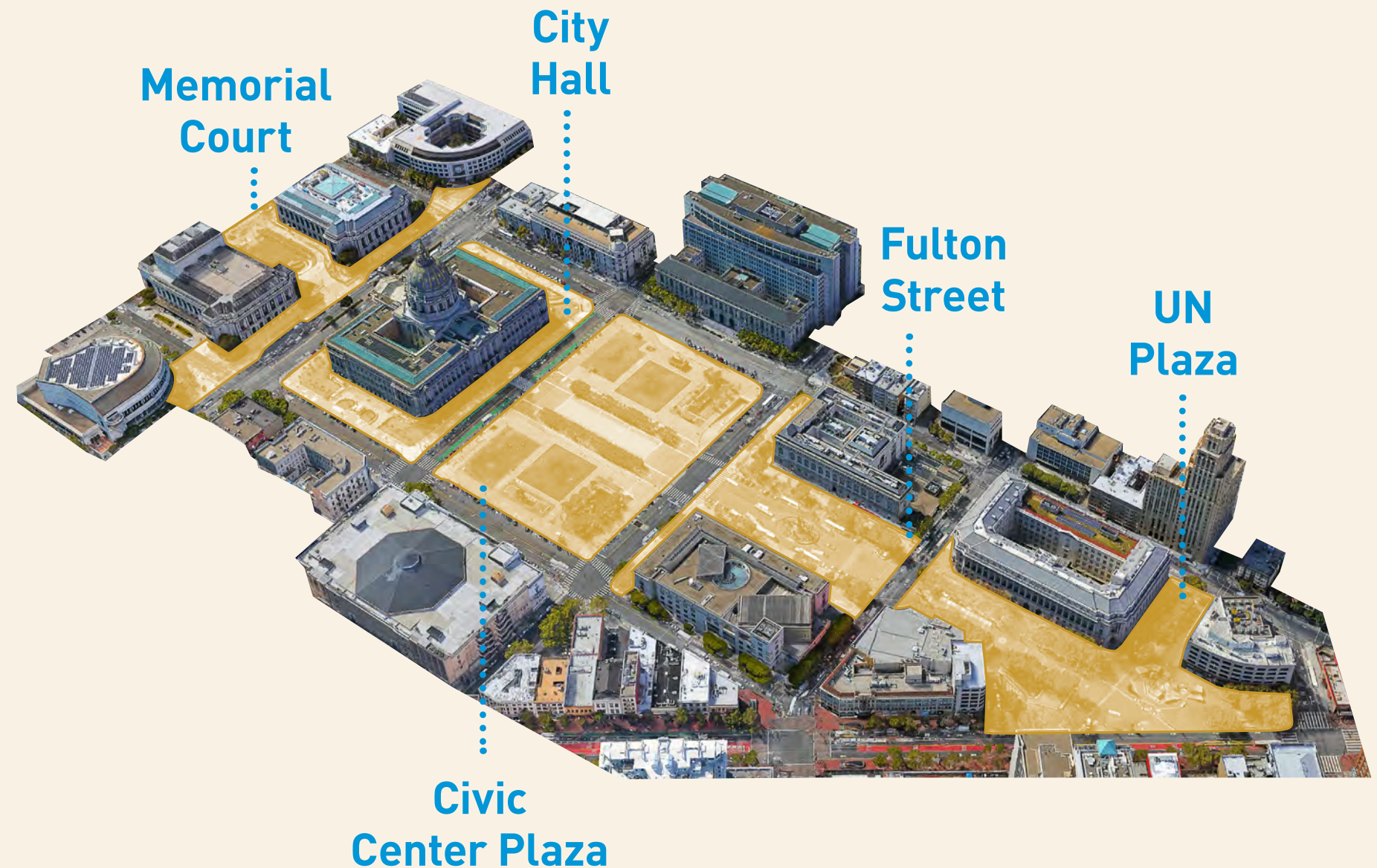
Soccer in Civic Center

4 Each space in Civic Center has a unique public life heartbeat

Each space has a unique public life heartbeat.

Method for analysis:

To analyze the profile of people spending time in each major space within the Civic Center District, we averaged public life volumes each hour from 8am to 8pm over four survey days, and then normalized them by square foot to arrive at activities per square foot for each hour of the survey.

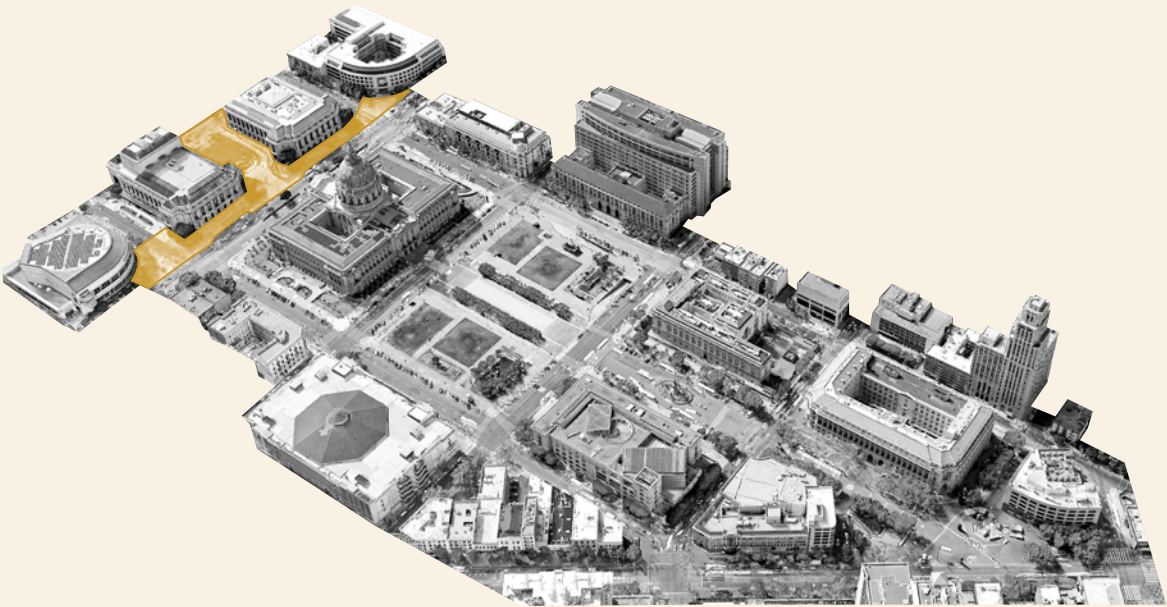


West Side of Van Ness + Memorial Court

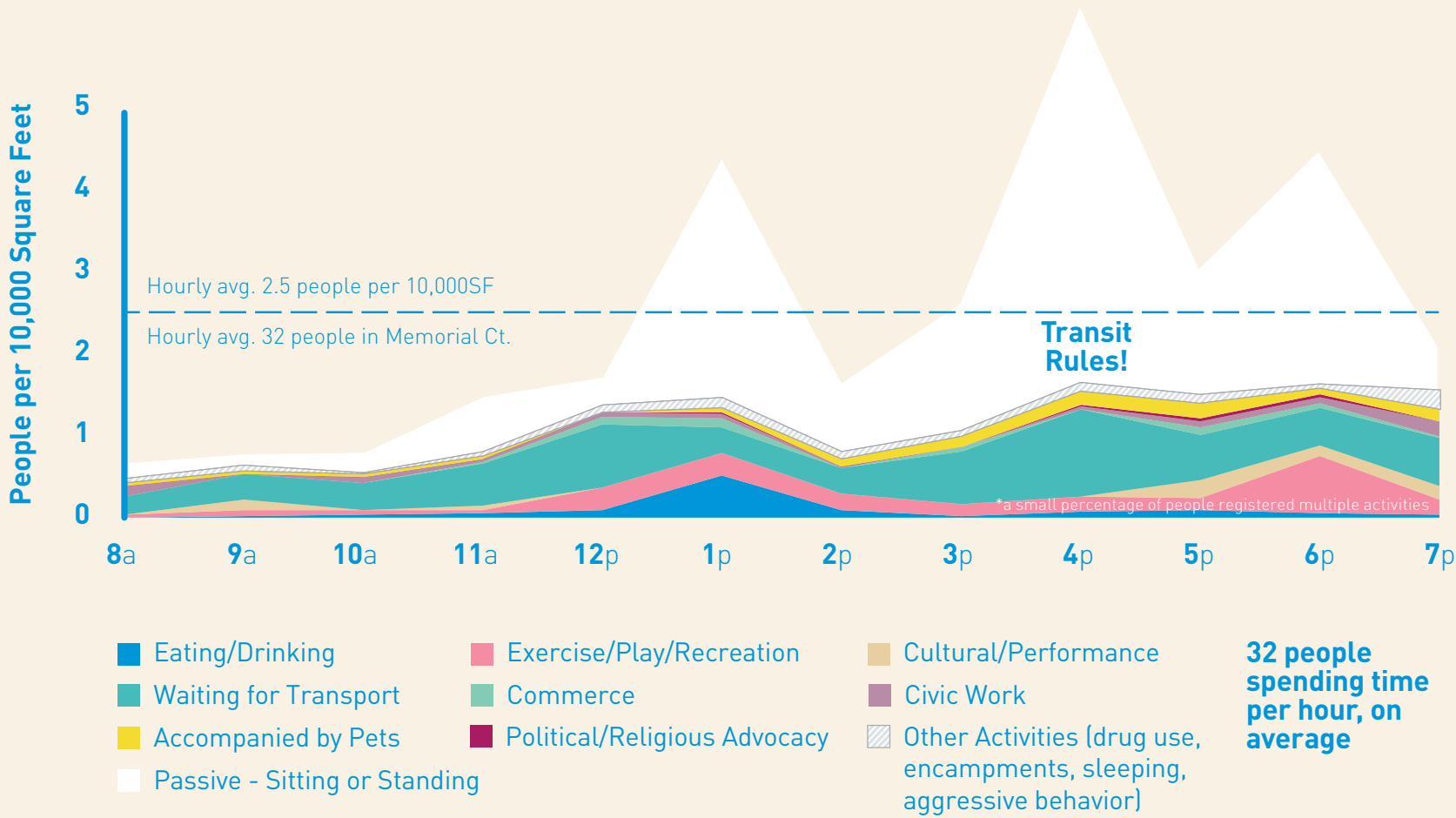
Van Ness between McAllister and Grove is a major transportation corridor, and most public life happening here throughout the day is people waiting for transit. The sidewalk in front of the Opera and Herbst Theater is periodically bustling with concert and special-event goers, but they don't host much activity when the stages are dark. Memorial Court is little-used - neither for memorial activities nor for other activities.

Seating

Provided: **10 seats** at bus stops
Demand: **21 people** waiting at bus stops at 4pm weekday peak, on average



2.5 people
Spending time per
10,000 square feet



West Side of Van Ness + Memorial Court

Key Takeaways

- Area used most regularly by bus riders
- Seating insufficient for peak demand
- Memorial Court is little-used

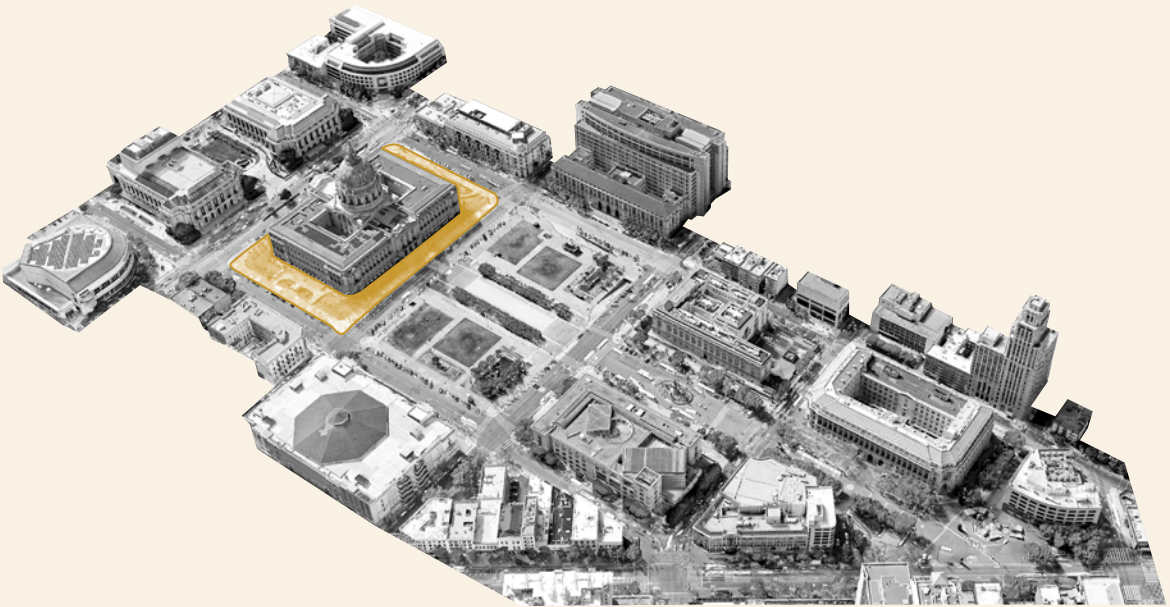
Design Challenge

- Enhance transit stops by providing transit- and city-provided seating incorporated into a high-quality public realm - leverage Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit
- Test new uses in Memorial Court by adding seating and programming.

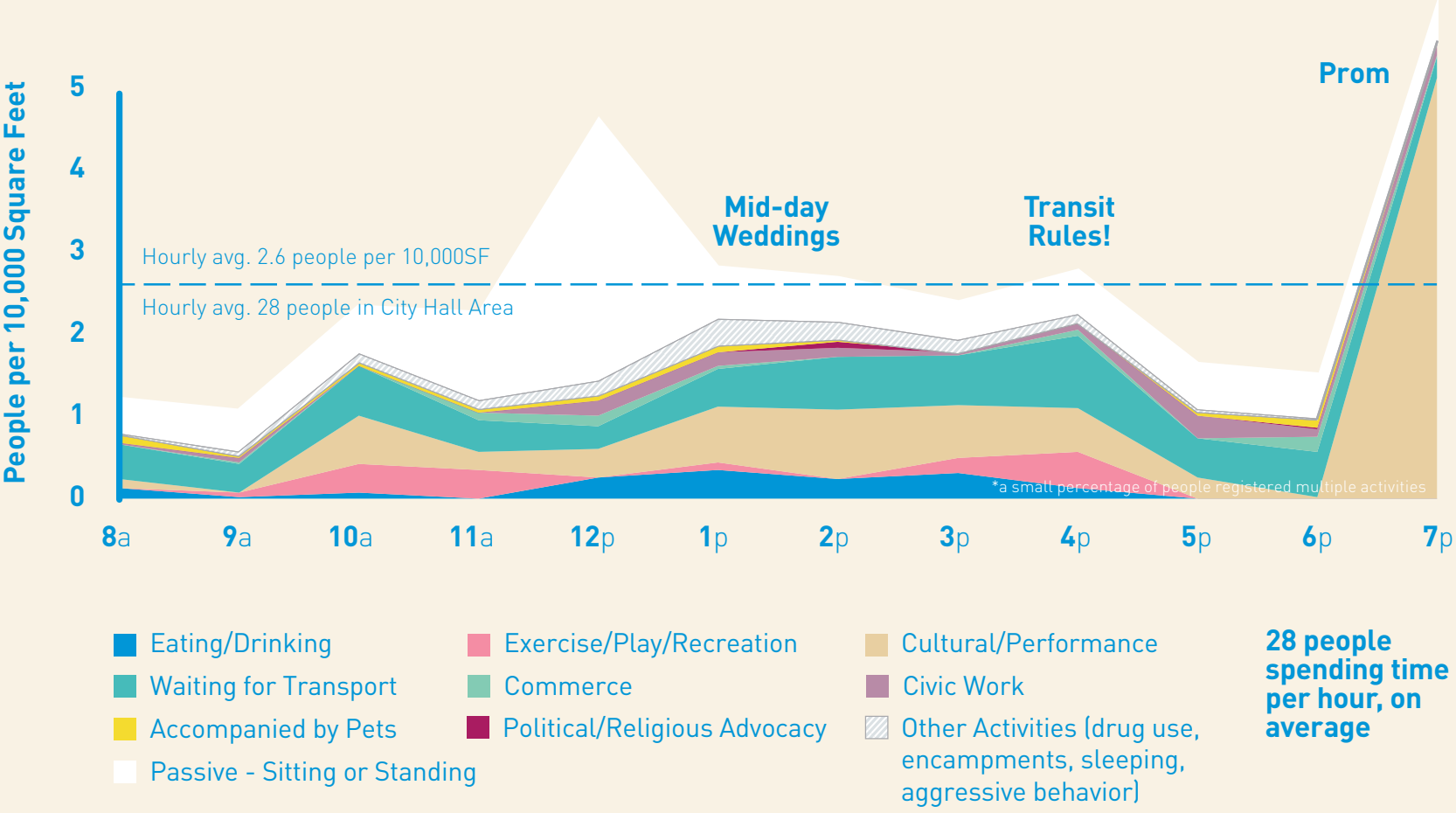


City Hall

The steps of City Hall are one of the most successful places in the Civic Center district, but this energy mostly dissipates at Polk Street. At the same time, despite being designed to be primarily decorative, the grassy edges of City Hall, ringed with seat-walls, are very well used by dog-walkers in the morning, commuters at all hours, for lunch in the sunny areas in the afternoon, as spillover areas for people doing business, and for civic activities around the east-facing entrance of City Hall. The north edge is used occasionally by children making use of the playground, and on the south edge for smokers and people loading and unloading.



2.6 people
Spending time per
10,000 square feet



City Hall

Key Takeaways

- The steps of City Hall and the grassy area that surrounds them are surprisingly well-used. Despite not being designed for active use, they are one the most powerful generators of life and activity in the District.

Design Challenge

- Connect the activity on City Hall steps to Civic Center Plaza, which could benefit from life and activity.
- Cultivate similar energy on the west steps.

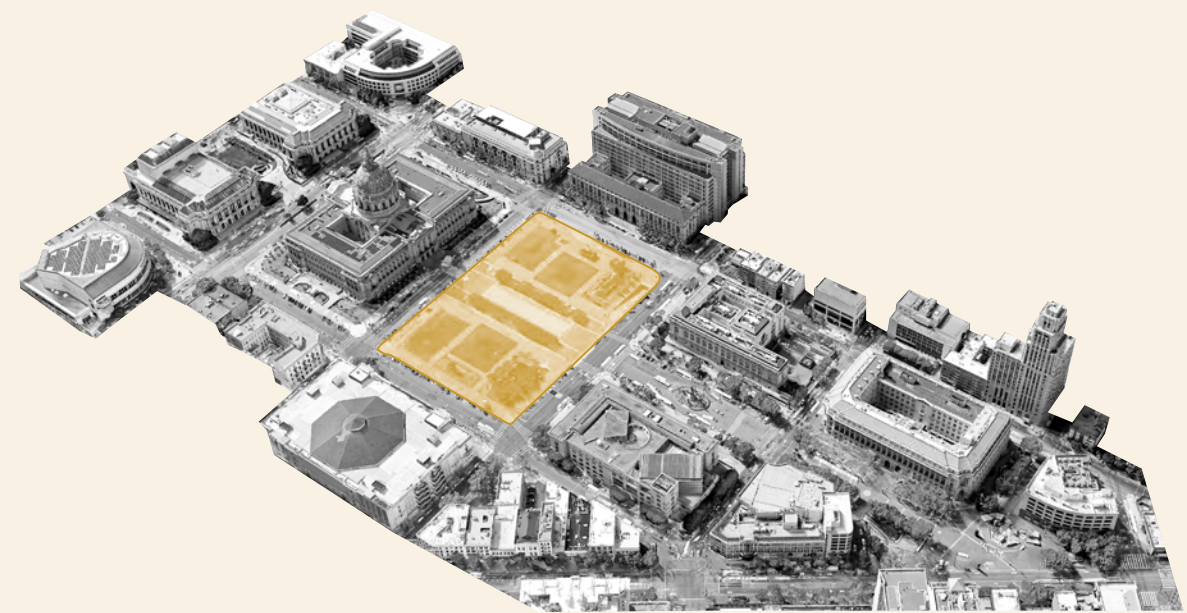


Civic Center Plaza

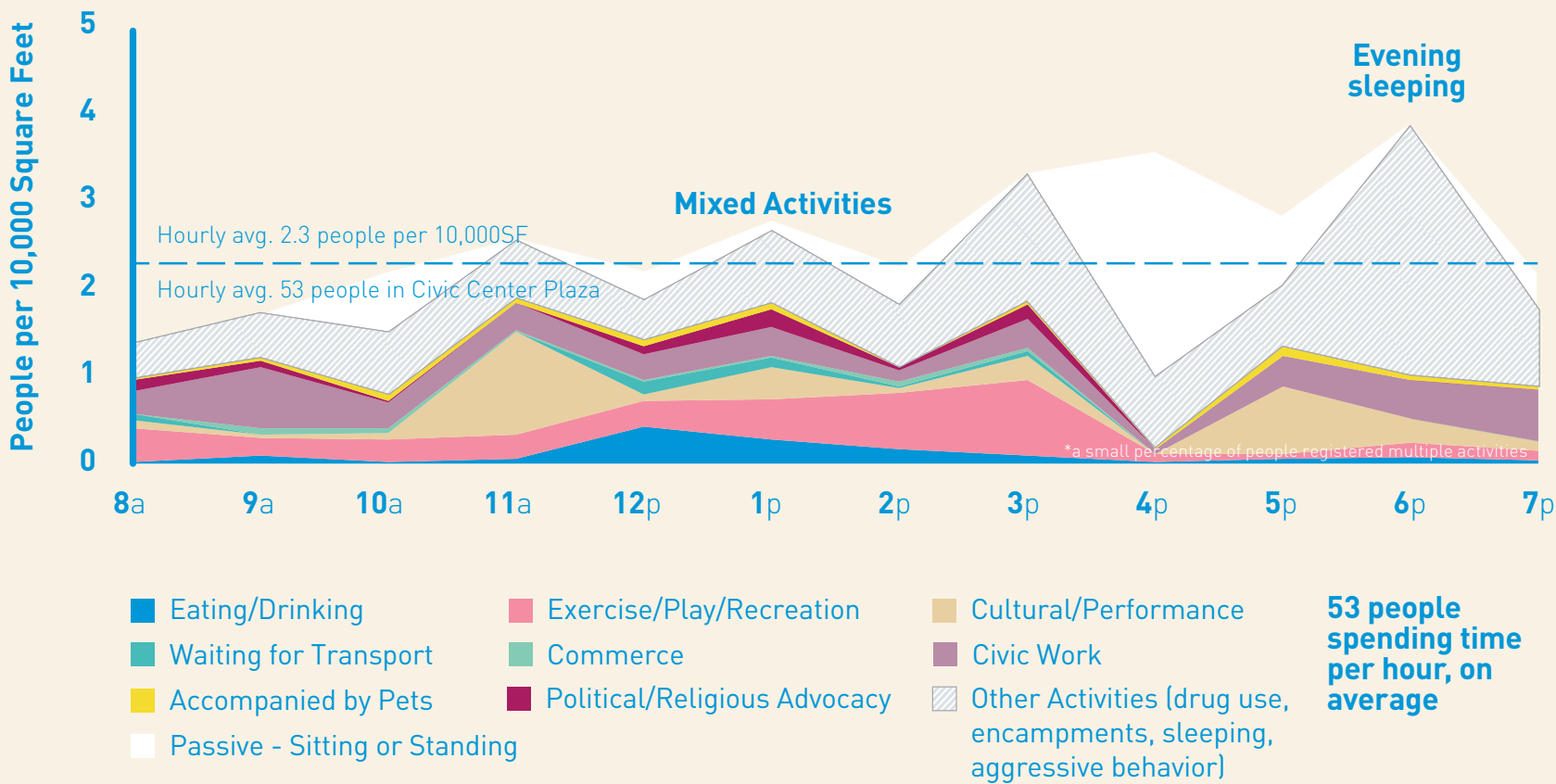
Although it is designed as a public space, Civic Center Plaza has no more public life density per square foot than the area around City Hall (designed to be decorative), or around Memorial Court and Van Ness (used mostly as a through-way). This may be because at key times in the morning and evening activities like sleeping and encampments dominate the public life profile and discourage others from using it.

The lack of spatial definition of Civic Center makes its public life fragile. Because it is so wide open, one person or group can overwhelm and break the integrity of the entire space, compromising the experiences of everyone else.

However, when the area is activated with special events, seating, food trucks, and other activities, people walking through the space are drawn in to spend time and stay.



2.3 people
Spending time per
10,000 square feet



***Note: playgrounds under construction during survey.
For data from playgrounds, see following slides.**

**53 people
spending time
per hour, on
average**

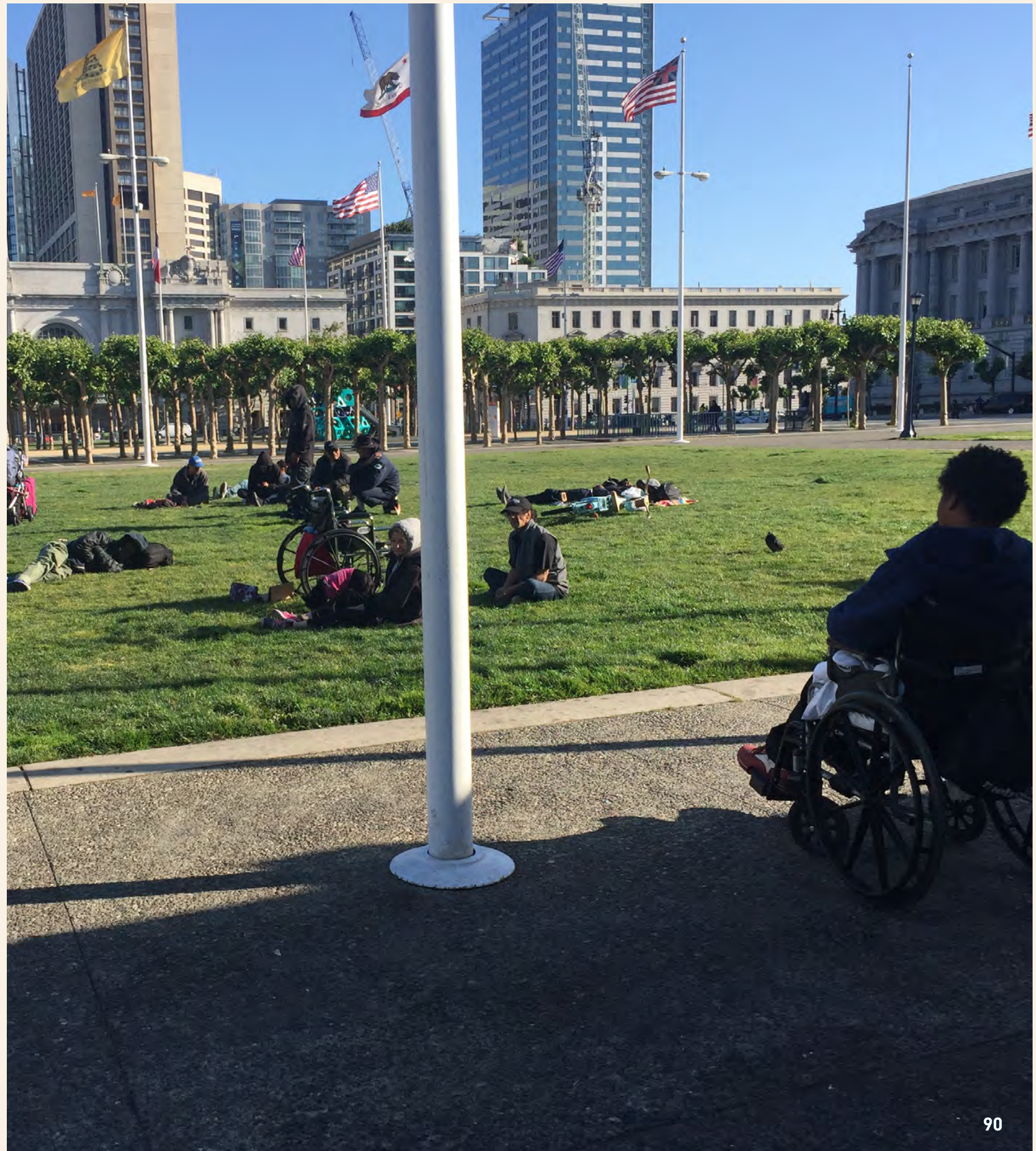
Civic Center Plaza

Key Takeaways

- Density of people spending time in Civic Center Plaza is very low.
- Active edges and spatial definition are important life generators and without them, Civic Center Plaza suffers.

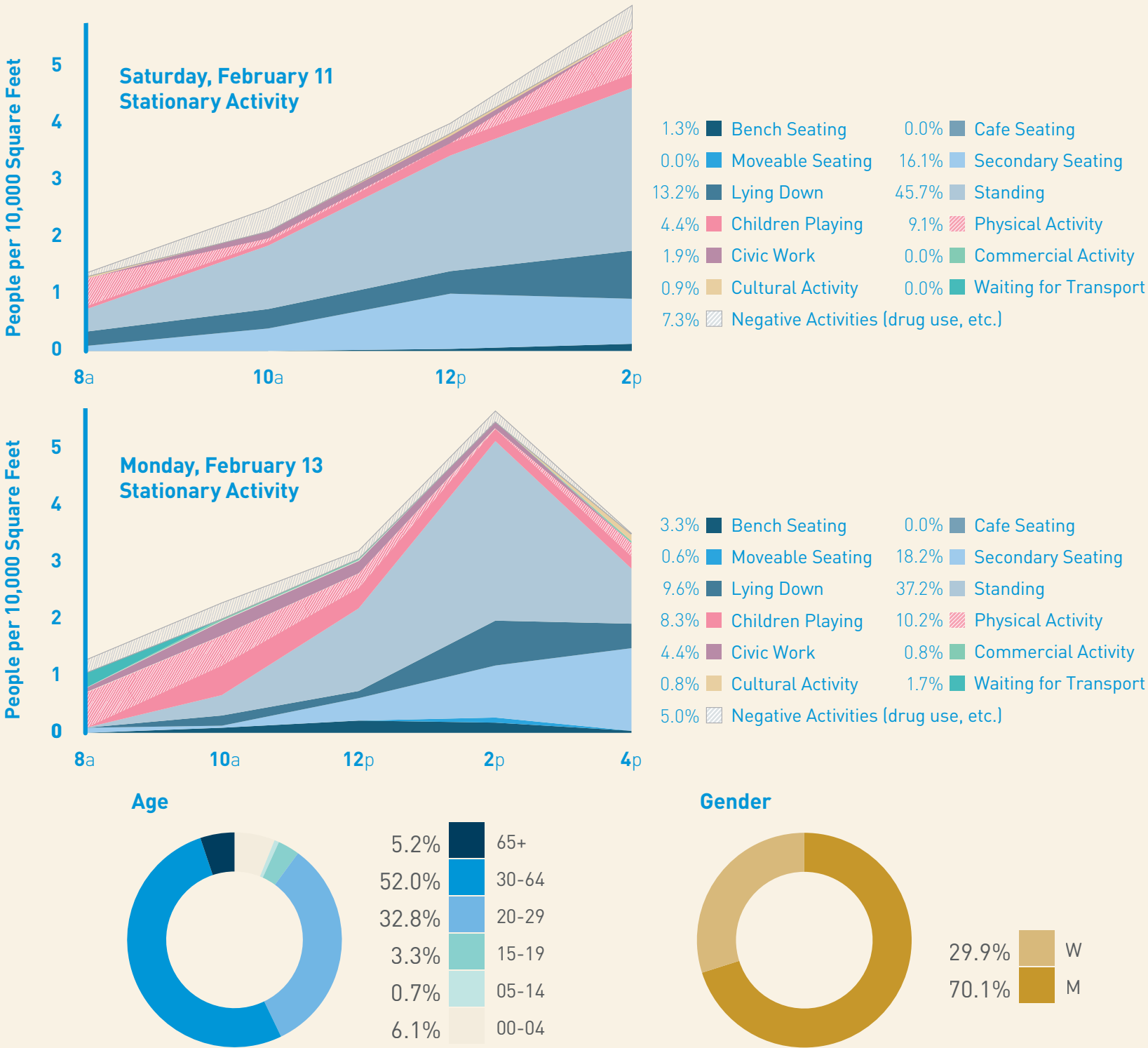
Design Challenge

- Generate the type of life and activity that occurs at the edges of the buildings that surround Civic Center Plaza by introducing new “edges”, human scale design features, and daily programming and activities.



Civic Center Playgrounds

A spot-survey of Civic Center while the playgrounds were open was conducted in February 2017 prior to construction.



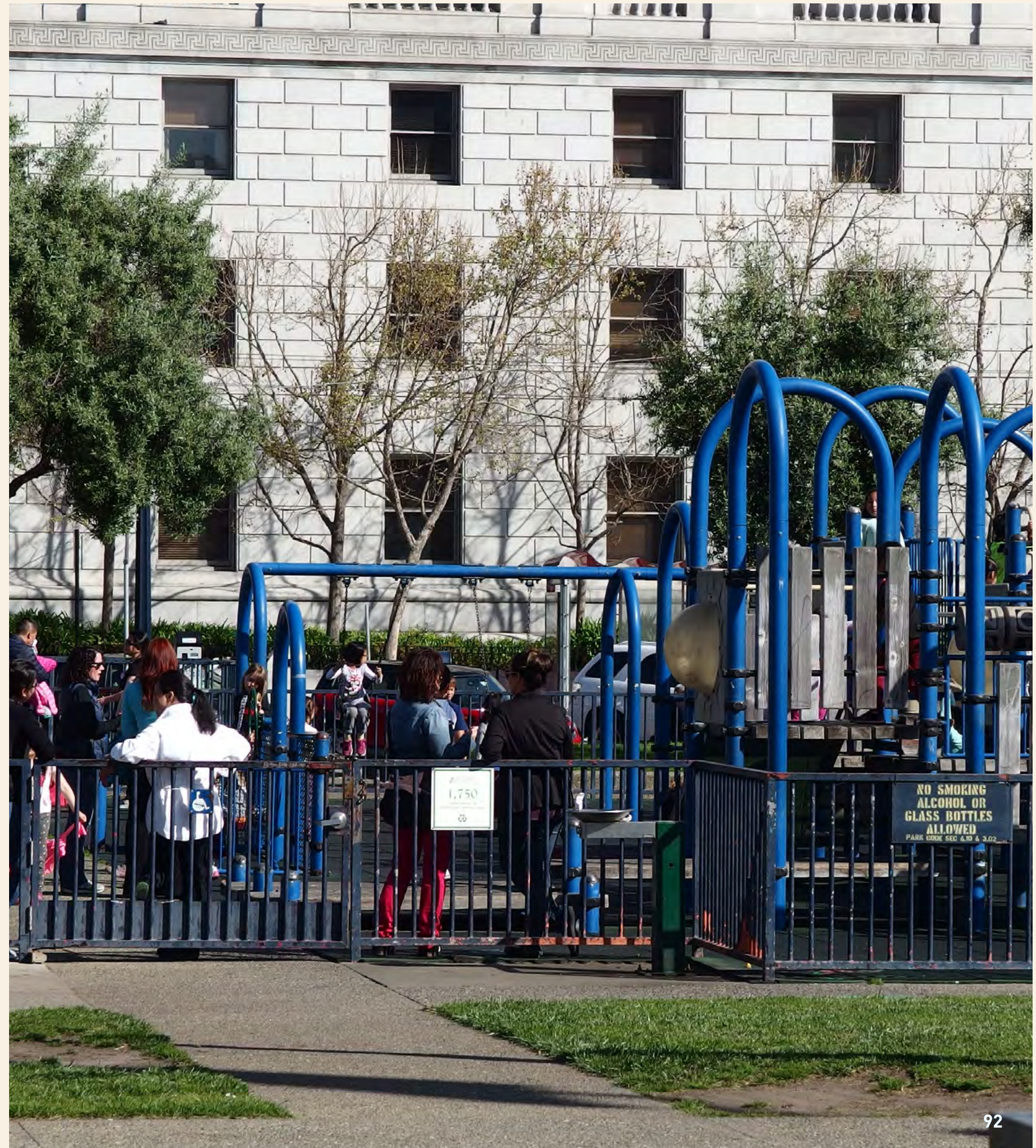
Civic Center Playgrounds

Key Takeaways

- The survey did not reveal a higher volume of public life in the plaza on average when the playgrounds were installed.
- Although play was a component of the public life when the playgrounds were installed, most of the people spending time in the plaza were adult men and activities like drug use comprised as much as 7% of all activities.

Design Challenge

- Ensure proper stewardship to allow safe access for children, the intended users of the playground.

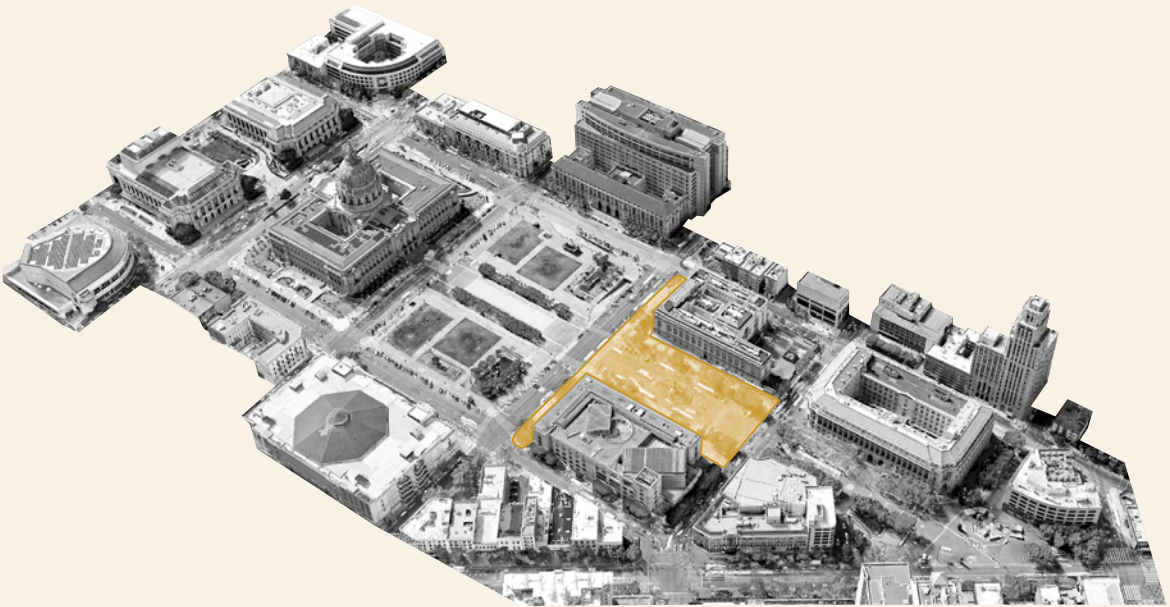


Fulton Street + Library + Asian Art Museum Plazas

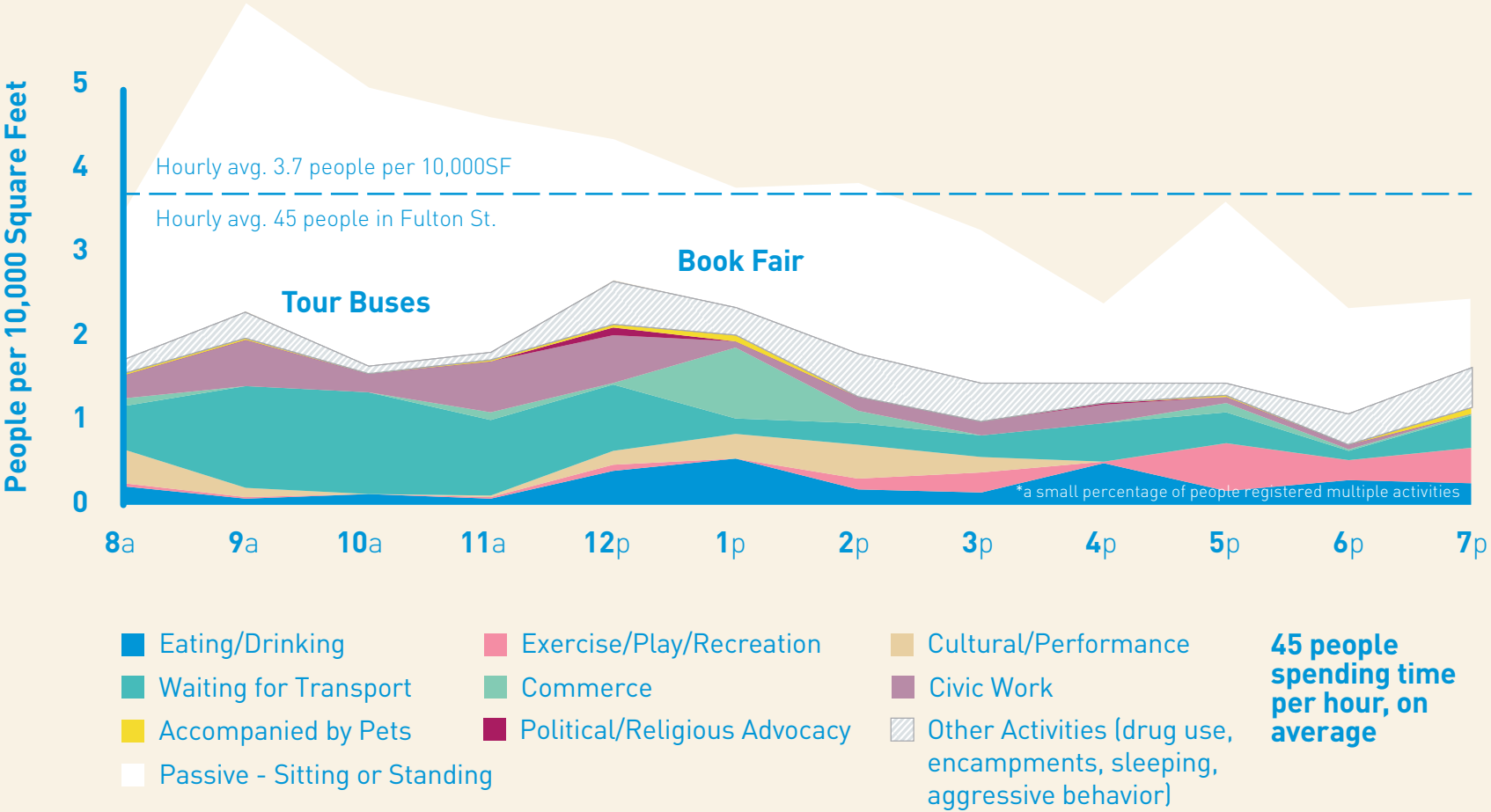
Fulton Street and the plazas in front of the Library and Asian Art Museum had some of the highest density of staying activities per square foot in the Civic Center District, especially when accounting for the fact that they were either activated by modest programming, or not formally activated at all. The presence of the only three public benches as well as human-scaled plazas, seatwalls, and shade reinforce the fact that people spend time in areas that honor the human scale.

Seating

Provided: **10 seats** at bus stops (not including seatwalls)
Demand: **21 people** waiting at bus stops at 10am weekday peak



3.7 people
Spending time per 10,000 square feet



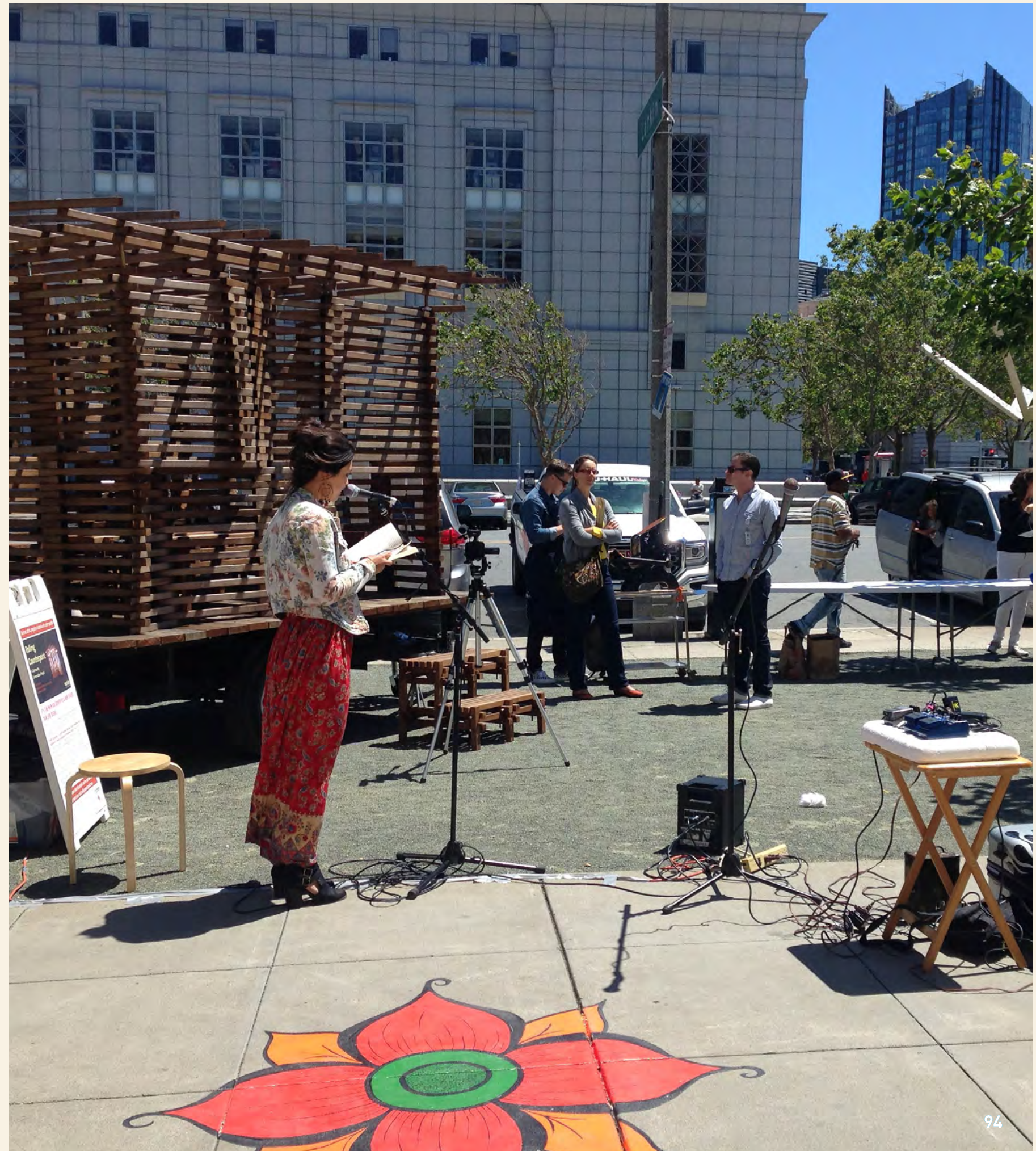
Fulton Street + Library + Asian Art Museum Plazas

Key Takeaways

- High density of people spending time in this area, especially considering little to no programming during survey.
- Sunny, protected, active edges are well-used.

Design Challenge

- Enhance active edges and experiment with bringing life and activity to the center of Fulton Street.
- Consider removing vehicular traffic and parking
- Provide access to historic monument
- Re-orient main entries of Asian Art Museum and Library towards enhanced public space

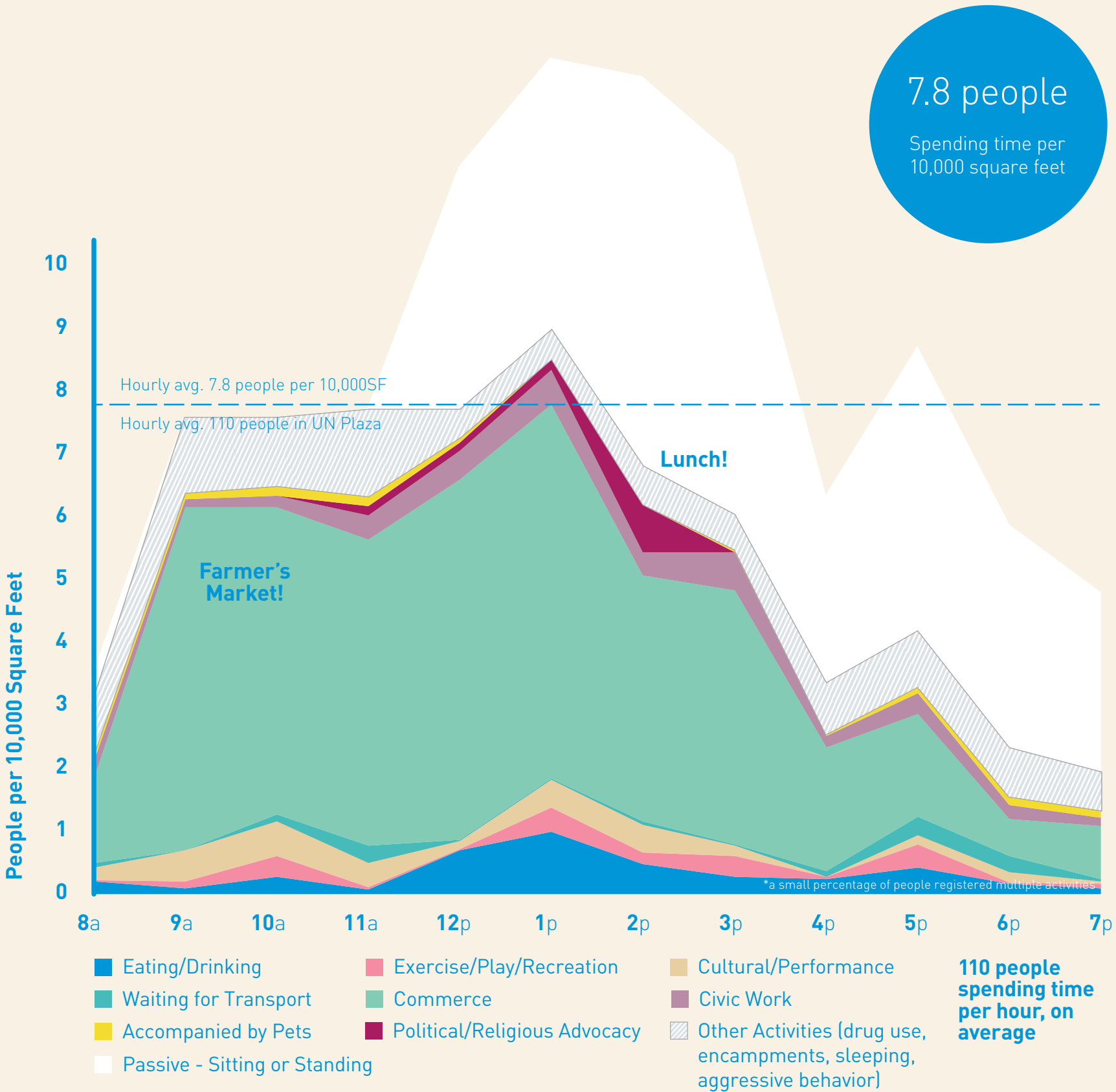


UN Plaza (Market Day)

UN Plaza is crowded and active on market days, especially during lunch time when commerce dominates all activities.

Yet compared to all the people buying and selling, a relatively low amount of people are eating or drinking. Perhaps this is because seating is limited, and the moveable seats provided during lunchtime are often placed in an exposed place with no shade on a sunny day.

The number of people engaged in “other activities” is high, but their presence is overwhelmed by the life of the market. The rest of the Civic Center Commons could learn from this instance of “diluting” the impact of illegal activities with robust programming.



UN Plaza (Market Day)

Key Takeaways

- UN plaza bursts with activity on Market days - but limited seating with no shade limits the number of people staying to eat lunch.
- Number of activities like drug use and encampments remains high, yet it does not dominate because of the number of other people in the space.

Design Challenge

- Fulfill latent demand for seating by adding a variety of high-quality, flexible invitations to sit and stay during market days.

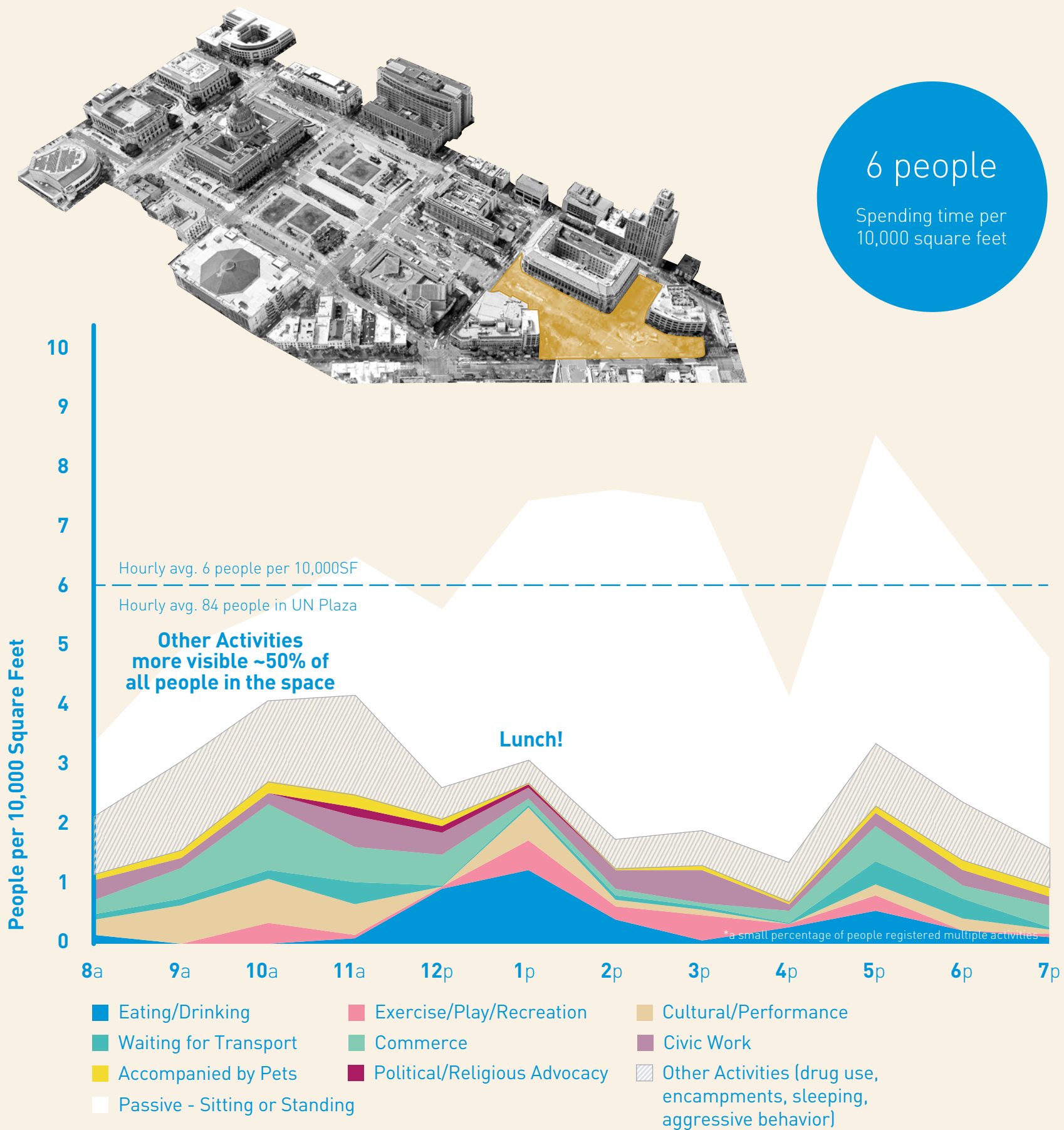


UN Plaza (Non-Market Day)

Even on non-market days more people choose to spend time in UN Plaza than in the other public spaces of Civic Center Commons. Yet, it is still much less active than comparable public spaces outside the District.

Activities like eating and drinking are as high on non-market days as on market days, suggesting that there is even more demand for seating at lunch on market days and demand for these amenities on a daily basis.

The number of people engaged in “other activities” is equal to market days, but because of lower total volumes of people in the space, there are times throughout the day when activities like drug use and encampments dominate the space.



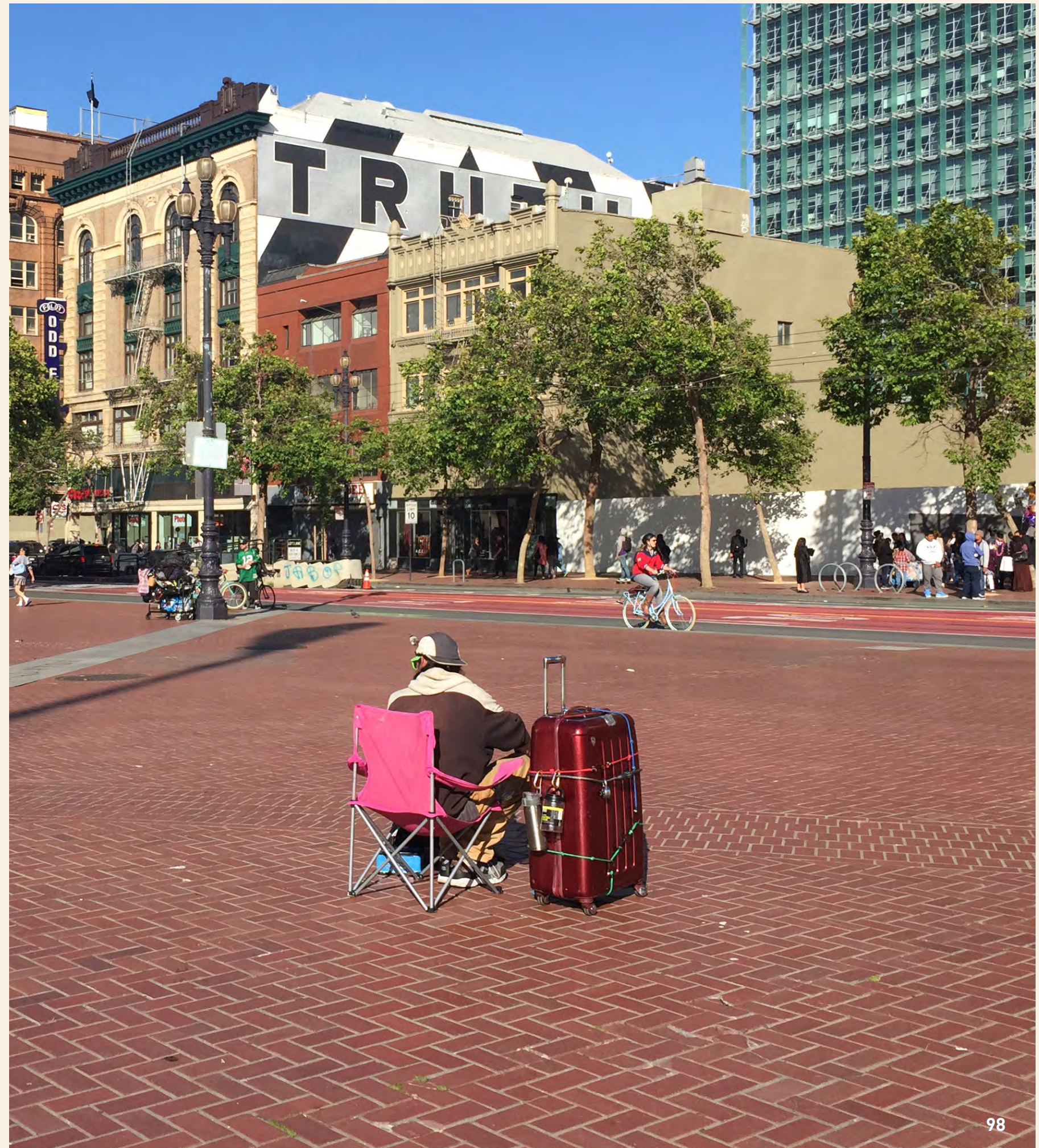
UN Plaza (Non-Market Day)

Key Takeaways

- UN plaza remains active on non-market days.
- The amount of sleeping, encampments, and drug use remains high on non-market days and is more visible because of the lower volume of people on these days.

Design Challenge

- Build on existing demand for market activities by expanding the daily availability of amenities in the space and providing opportunities to sit and stay.
- Build on success of market by adding daily commercial activity.
- Create space for culture and commerce on blank facade at back of Orpheum Theater.



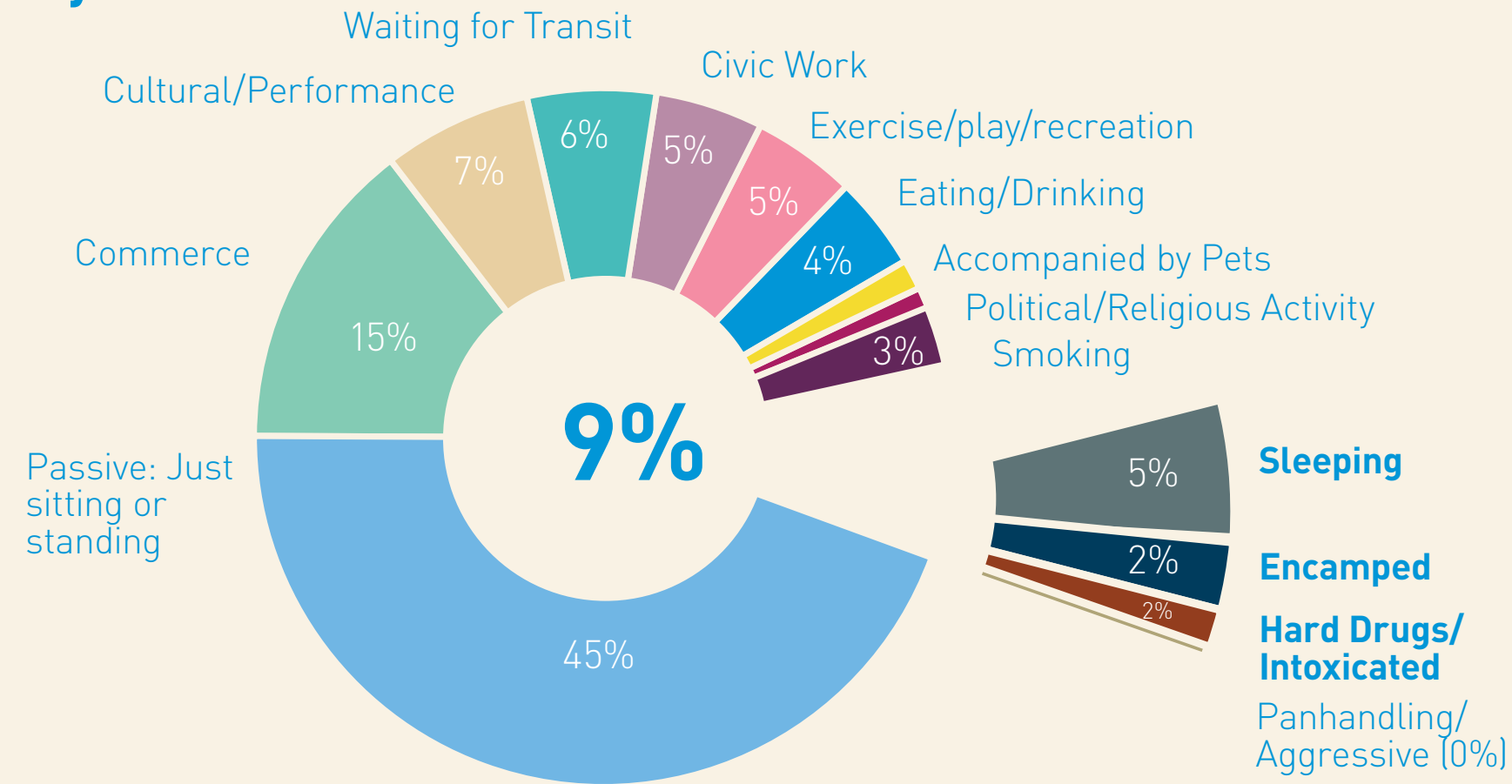
5 Activities like sleeping and encampments can be overwhelming, and even when they are not, have a ripple effect

Activities change depending on time of day

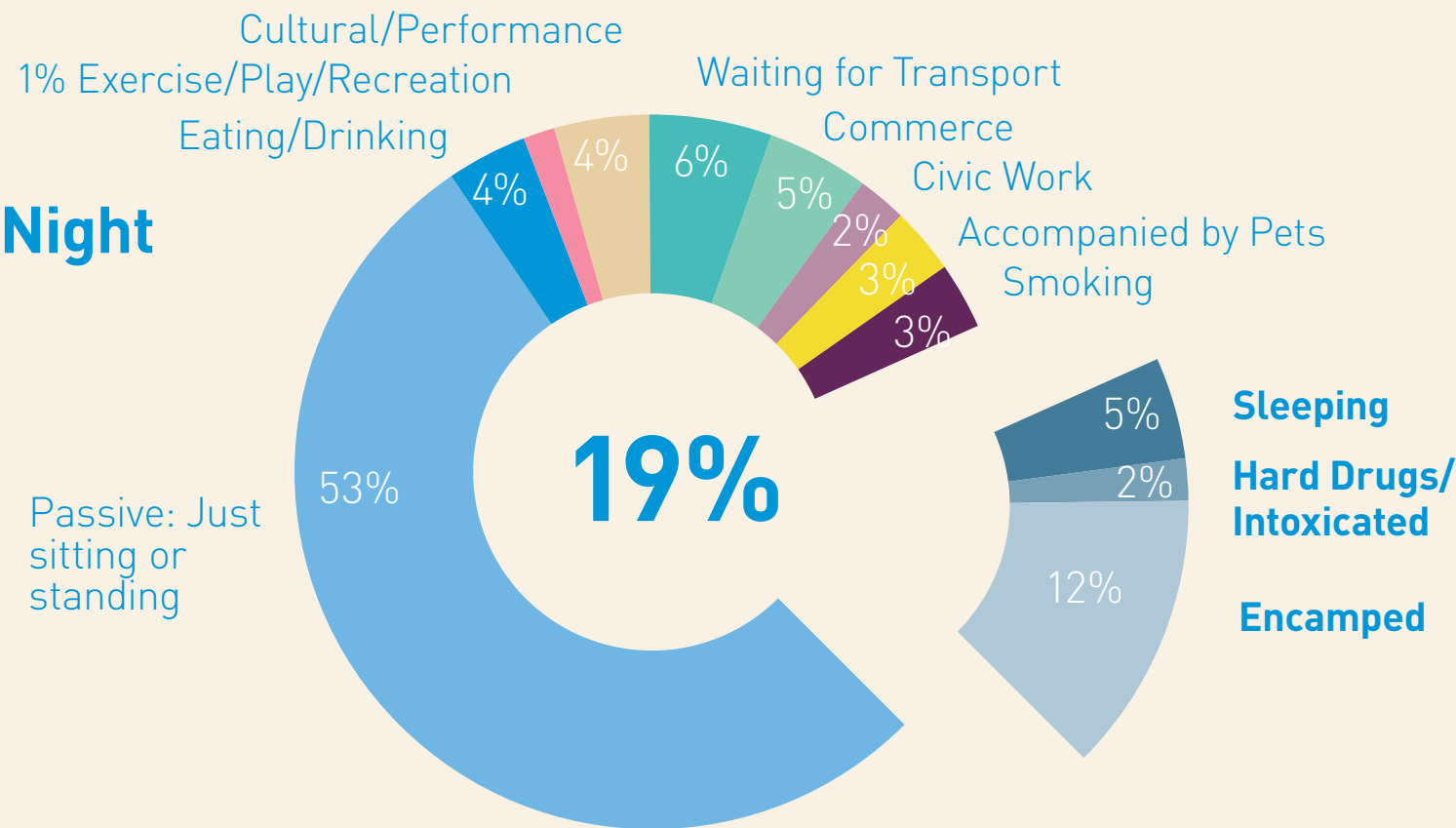
The number of people sleeping, encamped, doing drugs, intoxicated in public, panhandling or exhibiting aggressive behavior doubled at night.

At right: number of people doing each activity during daytime counts, all spaces, all days

Day



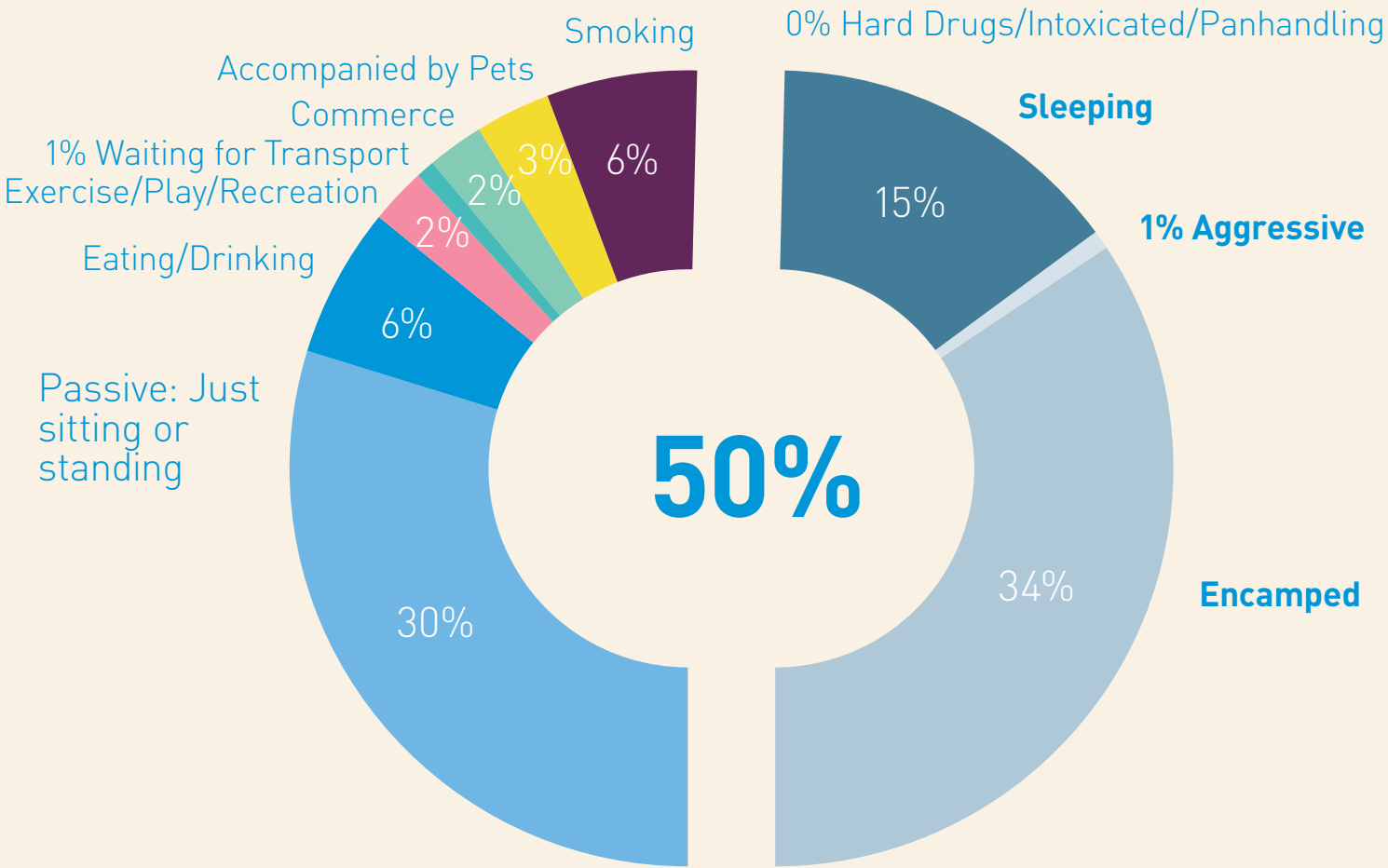
Night



Activities change depending on location

The number of people sleeping, encamped, doing drugs, intoxicated in public, panhandling or exhibiting aggressive behavior on Fulton Street between 7-10pm was 50%

Fulton Street, nighttime



Public life impact of sleeping, encampments, and drug use

Our city's central common space should feel welcoming to people from all walks of life - from tourists to patrons of the arts, to people experiencing homelessness and those living in SROs.

Some activities measured here, such as public sleeping, are not necessarily negative unto themselves. Others, like public drug use, are illegal and clearly have a negative impact on other potential users of the space.

The undefined, wide-open nature of Civic Center's public spaces, combined with the associations that many people have with homelessness and drug use, means that some activities like encampments, have unintended consequences of deterring other people from spending time in the space.

How might Civic Center productively discourage illegal activities while also providing more reasons to be there?

Design Challenge

- Create more invitations for more people to come more often and stay longer
- Support and enhance district stewardship activities like the Downtown Streets Team and Hunters Point Family
- Pursue thoughtful design to create more activity that discourages illegal uses.

6 Different users of Civic Center experience the same spaces differently

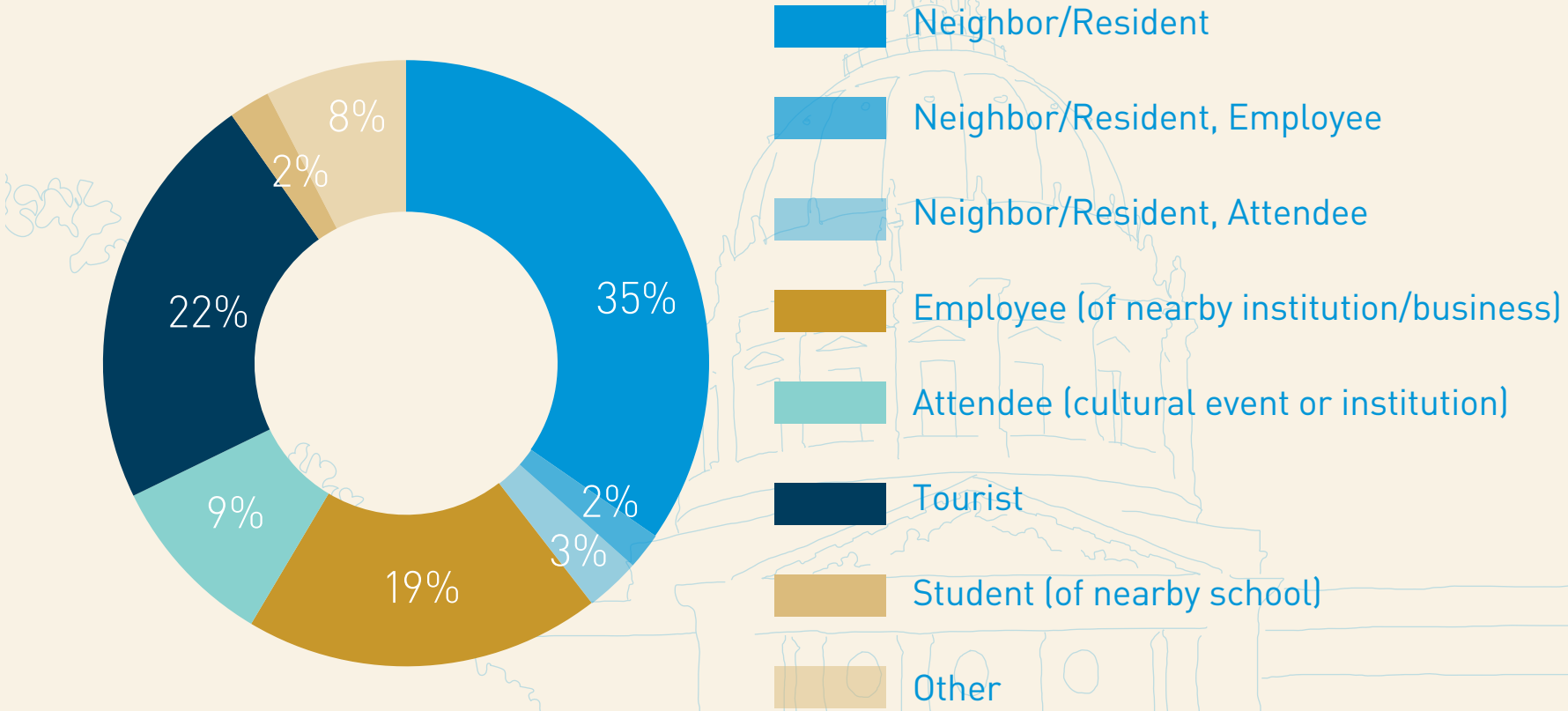
Perceptions of the Civic Center Public Realm by its users

Different users of Civic Center experience the same spaces differently and want different things from the space.

In some cases, we found statistically significant differences in the way people perceived the public spaces of Civic Center.

The following pages highlight findings by user group from the intercept survey which had 419 responses.

What best describes your relationship to Civic Center?



Civic Center
as experienced by an

Employee

Employees rated Civic Center most negatively compared to other groups. They tended to want more ways to spend time in Civic Center during the day, especially a place to sit at lunch. They focused on positive architectural qualities of the space and often associated homelessness with “dirty,” “drugs,” and “unsafe.”

Design Challenge

- Meet employee needs for lunch and after-work food and drink

“beautiful but a magnet for drug use; I am not so much neutral but conflicted”

“Mixed, Microcosm, Public”

A. What things would you **like to do** in the public spaces of Civic Center that you can't do now?

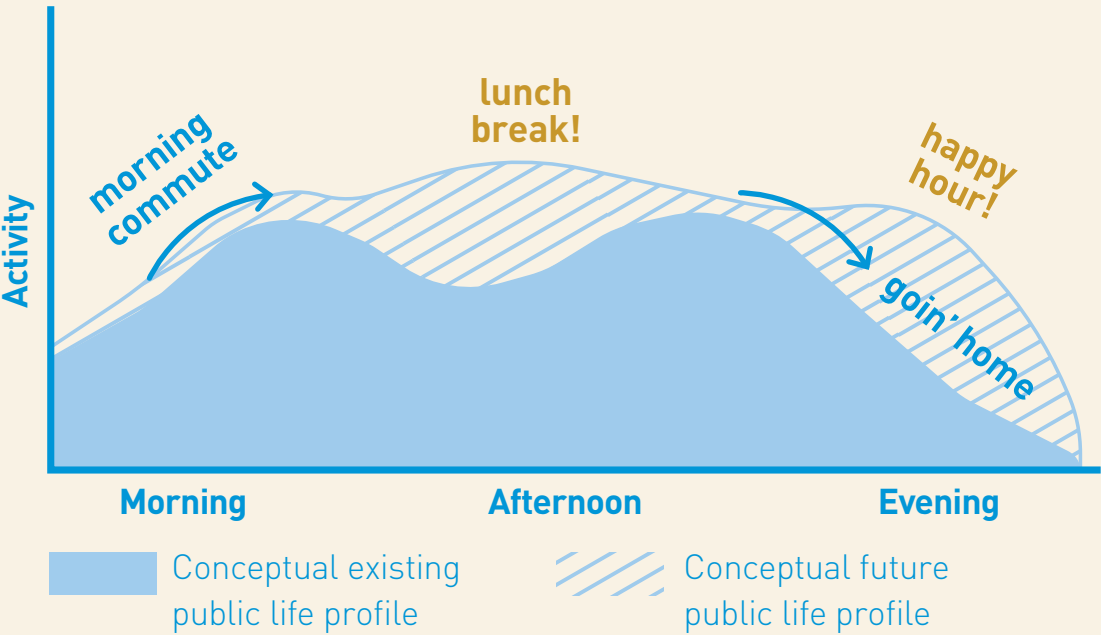
B. What would make you **feel more safe** in this place?

- sit in peace
- eat lunch
- hang out
- Drink wine, sit
- less drugs
- less homeless
- cleaner

“community, lost souls, platform for change”



From survey:
Describe Civic Center
in three words



Civic Center
as experienced by a

Neighbor

Neighbors, including unhoused people, tended to want more recreational activities. They mentioned the words clean and ‘homeless’ but not as much in association with ‘drugs’ or ‘unsafe’. Neighbors of Civic Center tended to rate the space more positively. 1/4 recognized a person they did not plan to meet.

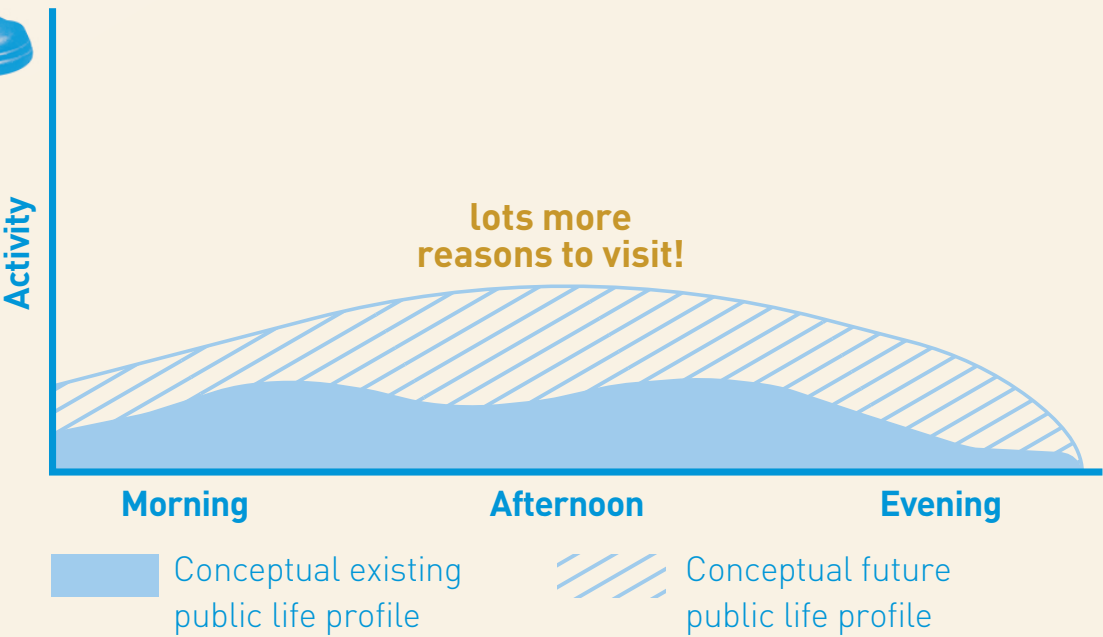
Design Challenge

- Serve neighborhood needs for open space and active recreation without limiting large civic gatherings



A. What things would you **like to do** in the public spaces of Civic Center that you can't do now?

B. What would make you **feel more safe** in this place?



Civic Center
as experienced by a

Tourist

Tourists felt the most positively about Civic Center compared to other user groups. They had more positive than negative comments. Special events attract 58% tourists.*

Design Challenge

- More photo-ops and other activities (including food and drink) that invites tourists to stay longer at different times of the day.



“
By day,
resplendent; by
night, unnerving;
architecturally
stimulating.”

A. What things would you **like to do** in the public spaces of Civic Center that you can't do now?

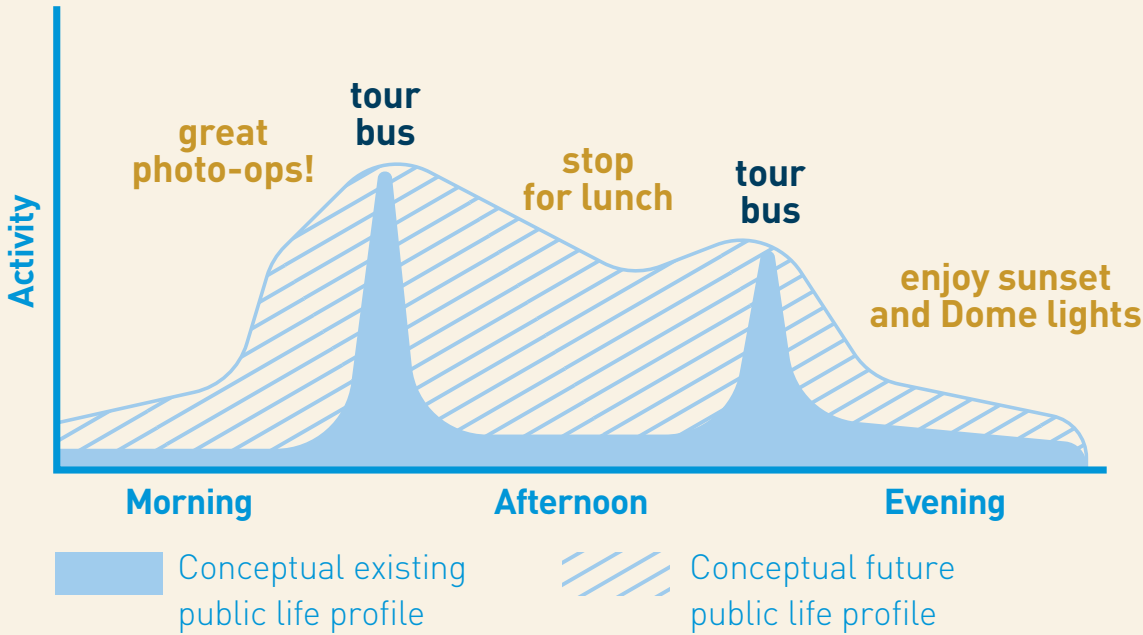
Bath-
room

Festival

More
culture

Sit with
wind
break

see more
green,
have food
carts



Civic Center
as experienced by a

Woman

Women have a more negative perception of Civic Center compared to men.

Although 50% of the people moving through Civic Center are women, few of them stop and stay.

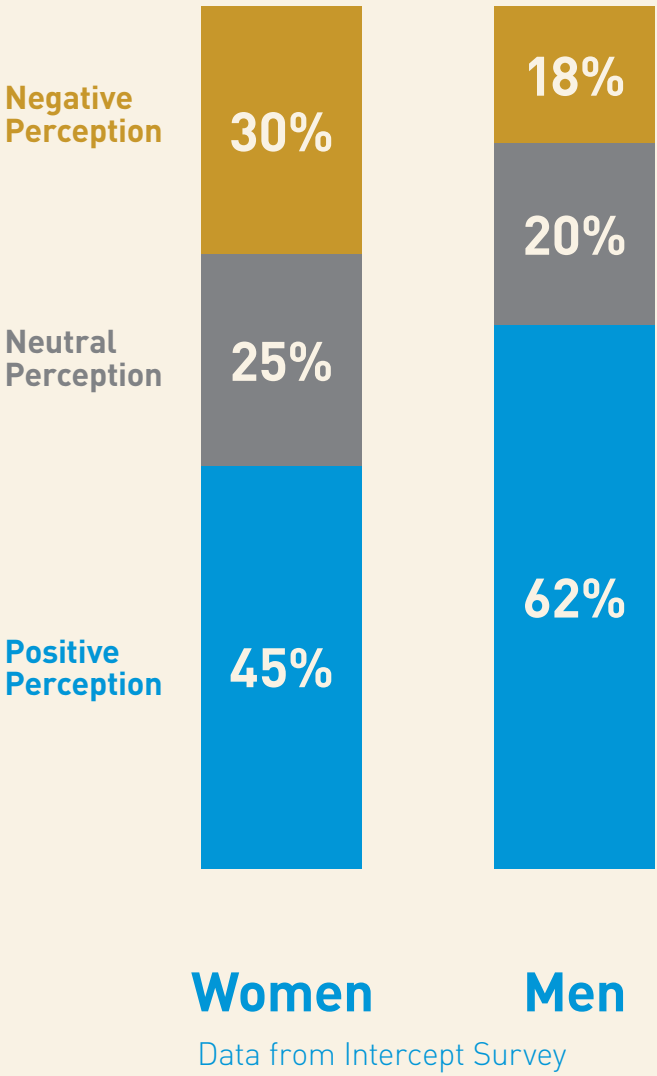
This may be because women tend to be sensitive to issues of safety in public and are deterred from spending time in Civic Center’s public spaces because of the ratio of undesirable activities to desirable activities.

Design Challenge

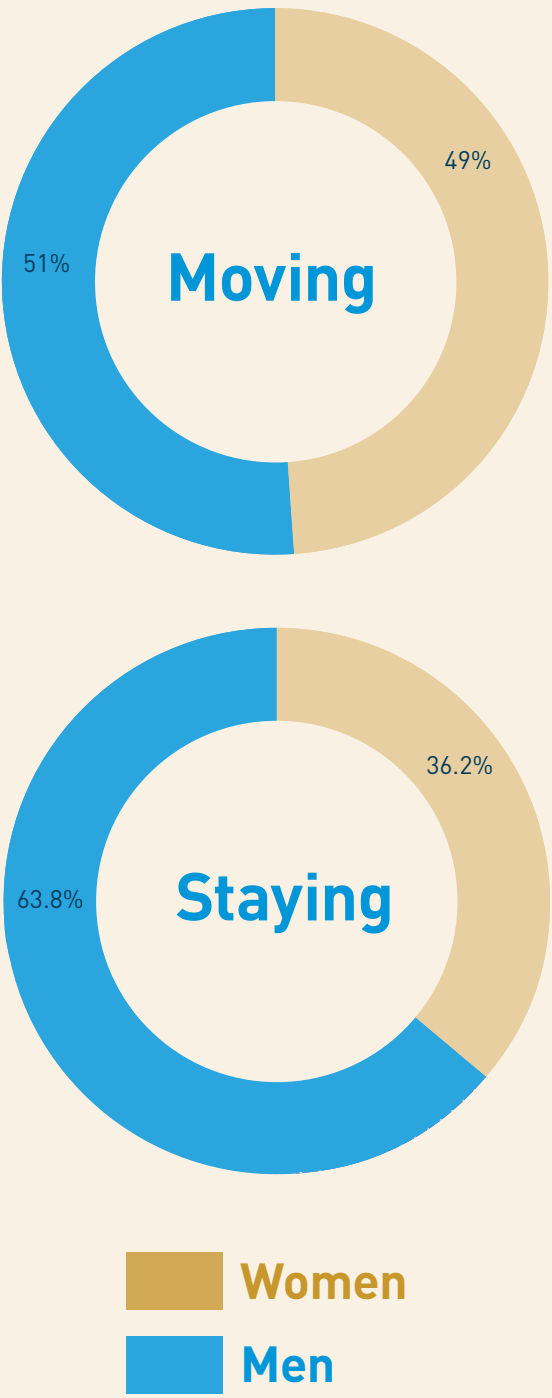
- Women are invited to spend time in Civic Center’s public spaces.



How do you feel about the Civic Center Area?



Men and women moving and staying in the district



Civic Center
as experienced by a:

Special- event-goer

Cultural institutions in Civic Center draw thousands of patrons every year. But, these events have a modest impact on Civic Center’s public life. Theatre-goers dash to their cars or transportation to go home after shows.

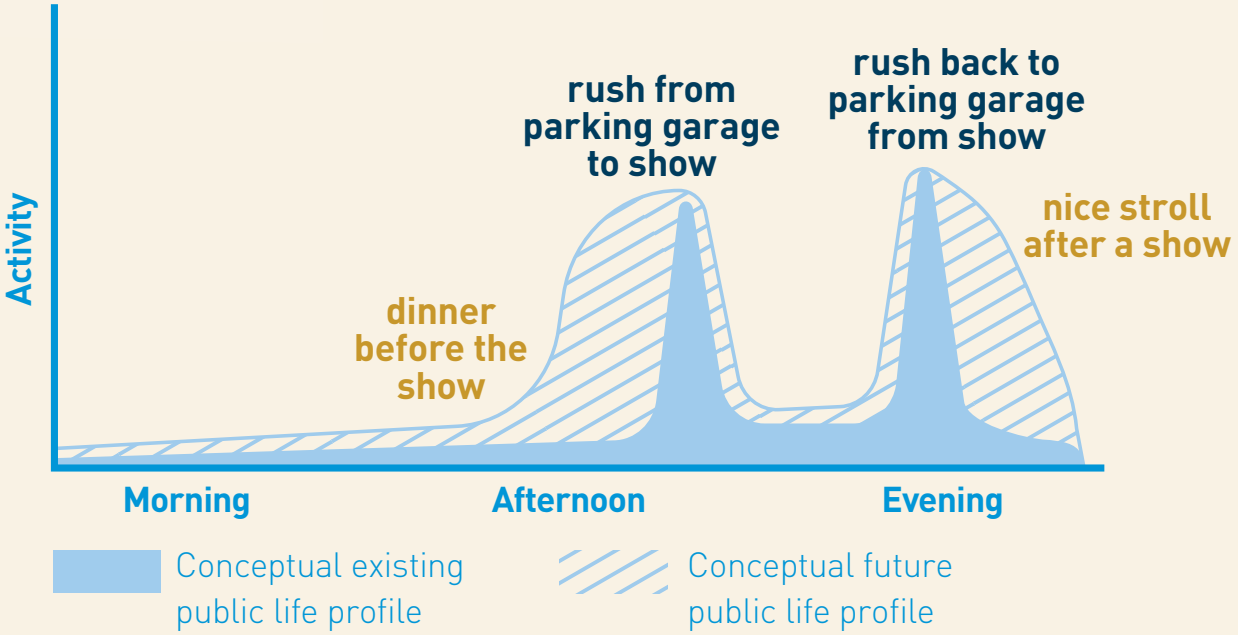
On average, there are 41 weddings every day at Civic Center, yet time for a ceremony and photographs in the Rotunda is limited. The steps are crowded as couples take photos there, but few extend their experience to Civic Center Plaza.

Design Challenge

- Special-event-goers bring their celebration to the public spaces of Civic Center and use these spaces to gather before and after events.
- Create invitations for this group to come more often and stay longer by



- creating opportunities for eating and drinking in the District.
- Enhance the experience of walking to and from transit and parking garages by improving pedestrian lighting and adding daily programming and activities.



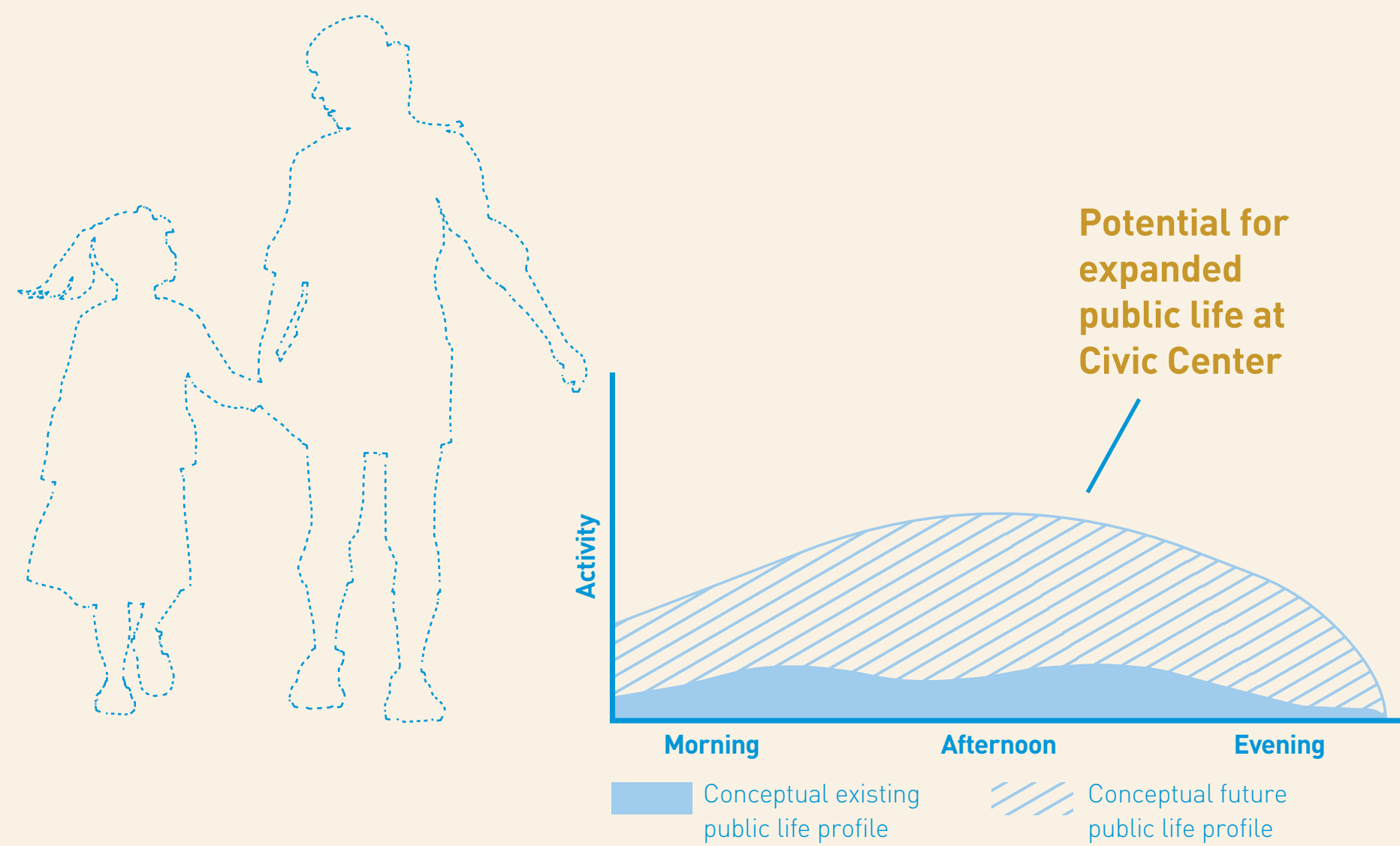
Civic Center
as experienced by a

Potential User

Most of the potential users of Civic Center are already in the district - they just need targeted invitations spend more time.

Low income people making between \$10-25k were under-represented in the intercept survey, as were Asian-Americans and students.

How can the design and programming of Civic Center extend genuine invitations to these user groups?



Public Life

Key Findings

1

Lots of people are moving through Civic Center

2

Peaks in activity do not generate ‘spillover’ impacts

3

Few people choose to spend time in Civic Center

4

Each space in Civic Center has a unique public life heartbeat

5

Activities like sleeping and encampments can be overwhelming in number, and even when they are not, have a ripple effect

6

Different users of Civic Center experience the same spaces differently