

AN EXPLORATORY REPORT FOR HISTORIC PARKROSE

Catalyzing Neighborhood Third Places

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Third places	04
Parkrose priorities	10
Research outcomes	13
Third place leader interviews	17
Logan Greene, Groundworks Tucson	18
Chris Brockel, FEED Kitchens	22
Carmen Chopp, Nomad Develops	27
Rachel DesRochers, Incubator Kitchen Collective	30
Conclusion.	35

00

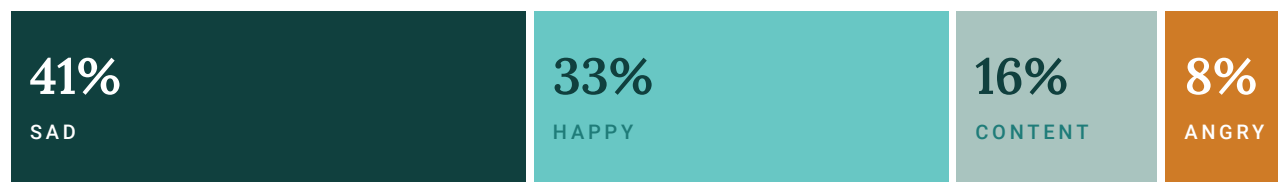
Introduction

Parkrose residents want safe, nearby, welcoming spaces to spend time in when they aren't at work. While the Sumner–Parkrose–Argay–Columbia Corridor (SPACC) TIF District creates a long-term tool for investment, Parkrose needs solutions to a variety of interconnected issues on a shorter-term basis. Limited park access, fragmented commercial space, underused properties, poor walkability along the busiest street, and a lack of community venues are challenges that should be addressed immediately.

We recommend Parkrose adopts a two-pronged approach: First, to catalyze usable spaces now, and second, to begin building the partnerships, property relationships, and funding strategy needed for larger improvements.

This report is an exploratory guide meant to shape Parkrose's community space development goals. After discussing relevant literature, it provides the takeaways from our research into neighborhood third places across the country and our conversations with a range of third place and community venue leaders. With this report, we hope Parkrose residents will move one step closer to outstanding neighborhood third places.

How residents feel about Parkrose today



Source: Historic Parkrose Culture Survey 2025

SECTION

01

Third places

HEALTH
SOCIAL FABRIC
SAFETY

Third places

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term “third place” in his 1989 book *The Great Good Place*. According to Oldenburg, our first places are our homes, second places are workplaces, and third places are those where people voluntarily gather. Oldenburg identified a number of traits common to these places:

“They are on neutral ground and promote social equity by leveling the status of guests. Conversation is the main activity and the mood is playful. Strangers are welcome, and there are regulars who feel a piece of themselves is rooted in the space. They enjoy the same feelings of warmth, possession, and belonging as they would in their own homes.”

~[Project for Public Spaces](#)

As Parkrose evaluates candidate spaces, its residents should keep these characteristics in mind, since a venue or space can be located and funded well but still fail one or more of them.

Community spaces of this “third place” type are associated with better outcomes for individuals and neighborhoods alike. And of course, if they are tied to business or entrepreneurial outcomes, the following impacts are enhanced by direct economic growth.

Health

A growing body of research links third places to measurable health and wellbeing outcomes. A 2019 study published in [Health & Place](#) by Finlay and colleagues describes third places as a

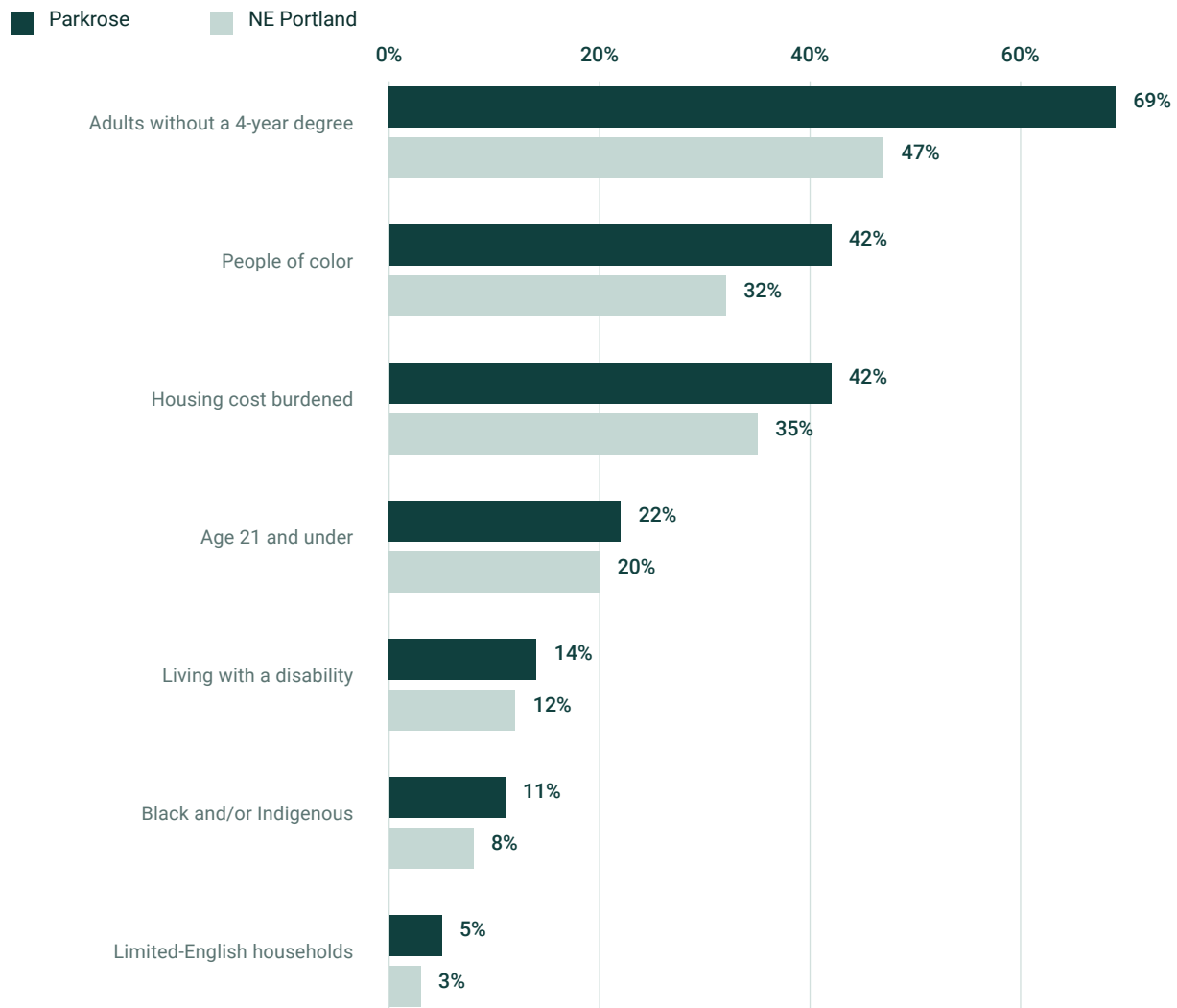
critical component of “social infrastructure,” the broad collection of physical places, facilities and institutions that facilitate social connection. The researchers identify several mechanisms through which third places support wellbeing. These include stimulation (exposure to new people and ideas), support (access to informal help and advice), protection (the presence of others who might intervene in emergencies), and care (staff and regulars who look out for vulnerable patrons).

Third places also generate what researchers call “social surplus.” These are collective feelings of civic pride, acceptance of diversity, trust, and overall togetherness that accumulate through sustained use. This surplus benefits not just individuals but entire neighborhoods. Libraries, for example, have evolved into community hubs that support gardening programs, employ social workers, offer youth programming and care options, and give access to career and education resources.

Parks and public spaces play a particularly important role for children, providing opportunities for independent play and social interactions that build competence and social skills. In 2015, [Brussoni et al.](#) found that children with ready access to unsupervised outdoor play showed stronger motor skills, social behavior, independence, and conflict resolution. A 2020 systematic review in *PLOS ONE* reported similar gains from unstructured nature play ([Dankiw et al., 2020](#)).

FIGURE 1

Parkrose in context



Source: HPR surveying

Third places

Social fabric

The “familiar stranger” is a related idea that also has relevance to community third places. Stanley Milgram, the psychologist best known for the Yale obedience experiments of the early 1960s, first described the concept in the following decade. Familiar strangers are people we recognize from repeated encounters, such as on the subway platform, at the bus stop, or in the café, but with whom we never formally interact. By definition, a familiar stranger must be observed repeatedly without direct conversation.

Subsequent research has confirmed and extended these findings. Paulos and Goodman replicated Milgram's experiments in the early 2000s, finding similarly high recognition rates in public plazas and other urban settings. Their [2004 study](#) noted that people often personalize their familiar strangers, giving them names and inventing stories about their lives. Subsequent large-scale mobility data has shed light on the basis of this phenomenon. A [2021 study in Scientific Reports](#) using nationwide mobile phone records from Andorra showed that familiar stranger encounters arise from the collective regularities of daily movement patterns.

Understanding familiar stranger dynamics could be useful to promoting neighborhood cohesion and activation as a whole. If more frequent physical encounters correspond to shorter social distances,

it might be possible to infer a strategic priority for Parkrose: emphasize community spaces that get people interacting repeatedly and consistently.

In practice, third places and the transit routes, sidewalks and spaces around them are engines for the repeated encounters that can build social fabric over time. Familiar strangers buffer the space between people we know well and complete strangers we will never see again. They establish our connection to specific places and reduce the sense of anonymity that can make living in cities feel impersonal and unfriendly.

Safety

The connection between third places and safety runs through Jane Jacobs' work on urban life. In her 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs said that [sidewalk safety emerges from continuous, diverse use](#), in other words, eyes on the street. Recent research has extended this insight to the familiar stranger phenomenon. A [2024 study in Security Journal](#) by Zahnow and Corcoran argues that familiar strangers can function as “potential guardians” whose repeated presence enhances informal social control. The researchers propose that familiarity reduces individual anonymity and increases moral obligation to obey behavioral norms, as well as to intervene when something goes wrong.

The implication is that third places contribute

01

Third places

to community resilience not just through the relationships they foster but through the predictable patterns of presence they create. A neighborhood where the same people walk the same routes, visit the same cafés and recognize each other's faces is one where unusual events are more likely to be noticed and addressed.

“

“They are on neutral ground and promote social equity by leveling the status of guests. Conversation is the main activity and the mood is playful. Strangers are welcome, and there are regulars who feel a piece of themselves is rooted in the space. They enjoy the same feelings of warmth, possession, and belonging as they would in their own homes.”

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

HISTORIC PARKROSE · THIRD PLACES

SECTION

02

Parkrose priorities

COMMUNITY CENTER
OUTDOOR RECREATION
EVERYDAY SPACES
IMPROVEMENTS TO SANDY BOULEVARD
NATURE ACCESS

Parkrose priorities

Based on our review of Historic Parkrose's existing community space research, area residents want more places to gather, spend time, recreate and feel connected without having to leave the neighborhood. This desire does not necessarily reflect as a need for one large civic project, though a community center stands out as the clearest priority. Residents are also hoping to establish a more complete neighborhood fabric: safer parks, youth spaces, local "third places," community events, usable natural areas and a Sandy Boulevard corridor that functions as a true neighborhood center.

Community center

The clearest request is a community center or similar indoor gathering space. Residents, especially young people, need a safe place to go after school to study, socialize, play sports, use Wi-Fi, learn skills, increase their career education, and build relationships. A full-service community center would meet that need, but a smaller shared-use or community-run facility could also work if it is accessible, affordable and programmed around local priorities.

Outdoor recreation space

Additionally residents want more outdoor recreation space. Parkrose has limited park access, with Senn's Dairy Park serving as the only developed

city park within the neighborhood. Many residents use parks outside Parkrose, but distance, freeways, safety concerns and limited nearby facilities create barriers. In terms of specific requests, residents seek more green space, safer parks and walking paths, community gardens, basketball courts, play areas, splash pads or water features, picnic and barbecue areas, and places where children and teens can be active without feeling watched, displaced or unsafe.

Everyday/commercial spaces

Parkrose also needs more everyday third places. Residents repeatedly name spaces such as coffee shops, bookstores, galleries, food destinations, indoor marketplaces, venues, and other casual gathering places as priorities. Destinations like these are often associated with commercial activity, and could represent an opportunity for a neighborhood-scale public-private partnership.

Goals for Sandy Boulevard

As the area's main retail thoroughfare, Sandy Boulevard is the natural focus for many of these ideas. Residents want the street to become more welcoming, walkable and useful as a neighborhood hub. Suggested improvements include benches, trees, murals, plazas, a fountain or splash pad, pop-up shops, public markets, street fairs, event space, shade and shelter, cleaner storefronts, and more

02

Parkrose priorities

more family-friendly businesses. The goal is to make Sandy a place where Parkrose residents want to spend time.

Nature

Finally, residents want better access to nature, especially the Columbia Slough. Many people are unaware of it or find it difficult and unsafe to reach. Safer access, signage, education, youth restoration projects, community paddles, maintenance and a

more visible public entrance would make the slough a real neighborhood asset.

Across these requests, Parkrose residents want community spaces that are nearby, safe, welcoming, youth-friendly, culturally inclusive and useful in daily life. They also want improvements to benefit current residents, not accelerate displacement.

SHARE OF RESIDENTS WITHIN A HALF-MILE WALK OF A PUBLIC PARK

Counting Senn's Dairy Park



51%

Excluding Senn's Dairy Park



9%

Source: Parkrose Community Plan — Community Spaces and Access to Nature: Existing Conditions and Recommended Solutions, January 2022, pp. 4–8.

SECTION

03

Research outcomes

WHO PROVIDES THE SPACE
WHAT SCALE OF SPACE
THE THIRD PLACE SHADOW MARKET

Research outcomes

There are many ways to organize community spaces and third places. Across the case studies and interviews, the largest hurdle is identifying and securing access to physical space for long enough to build trust, programming and consistent use. To move Parkrose closer to catalyzing a space in the neighborhood, we recommend asking the following questions before seriously moving to secure a location for a third place:

1. What is the focus of the space?
2. Who provides the space?
3. How large is the space?
4. What is the timeframe for space accessibility?

Who provides the space?

Across the surveyed case studies, we see two important questions. Alongside what the space actually does, it's important to consider how the space's organizers secured the property itself, whether on a long-term or short-term basis.

Community groups can have a strong concept, clear demand, and committed partners, but if one of them isn't a provider of physical space itself, communities will hit a blocker.

From our research, we note that the way the space is sourced often shapes the project from the very beginning. It affects speed, cost, governance, risk, programming flexibility and the degree of control a

community group has over the future of the venue. The most common pathways are self-owned or already controlled space, which are easily the simplest solutions to get up and running, alongside leased or acquired spaces and public contribution.

SELF-OWNED OR ALREADY CONTROLLED SPACES

Organizations or community groups that already own, lease or otherwise control space are best positioned to deliver immediate third-place wins. In the beginning, control matters more than location. A simple room, lot or storefront that can be programmed now is usually more valuable than an ideal location that may take years to secure.

Parkrose can start with the assets already within reach. Existing nonprofit or municipal offices, shared community rooms, underused lots under direct control, faith spaces with preexisting partnerships, or spaces owned by community members themselves could all support this kind of activity in the neighborhood.

LEASED, PURCHASED, OR DONATED SPACES

If a community doesn't have access to self-owned or controlled spaces for their third place, they may need to look at a leased, purchased, or contributed option. These approaches rely on external partnerships and may be donation-oriented or transactional. That can mean leasing from a commercial landlord,

Research outcomes

fundraising to cover occupancy costs, negotiating donated access from a property owner, or using a back room, hall, or storefront that would otherwise sit idle but is relatively affordable.

Working with property owners, especially around themes of activating vacant space, requires greater sophistication but can yield far more flexible space solutions. A writing group in the back of a bookstore, a recurring art workshop in a storefront, or a neighborhood music night or a craft market in an underused commercial space can all build community, and when properly scaled to the demonstrated demand, can be stood up relatively quickly.

PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION

In some cases, a municipality, public agency or local governance organization provides space to a sponsoring nonprofit or community partner. This can be a powerful path because public participation can dramatically reduce or eliminate land and improvement costs, lend credibility to the project, and connect a project to broader economic development, parks, transportation or urban renewal goals.

However, working with public agencies is also usually slower, exposes the process to substantially more regulation and scrutiny, and requires sophistication to efficiently navigate partnership

structuring. Access to publicly contributed space depends on relationships, timing, administrative capacity and alignment with agency priorities. Consequently, publicly contributed space is better treated as a medium- to long-term objective for Parkrose than as an immediate solution. Conversations with Prosper Portland, transportation officials, parks partners and other public-sector stakeholders should continue, but early momentum should not depend on waiting for a public space agreement.

Research outcomes

Third places and community spaces can work at many different scales.

Small-scale opportunities to provide a third place include:

- Street plazas
- Sidewalks
- Food cart pods
- Parking areas
- Parks and rights-of-way, especially on a temporary basis
- Local business space
- Underutilized commercial office, retail, or industrial space
- Multipurpose rooms at municipal or non-profit properties

Portland's Street Plaza program shows how even a small right-of-way intervention can give pedestrians a place to sit, hear music, host events and gather. Parkrose already has momentum here; a more intentional food cart pod, market lot or activated parking area could build on existing food cart activity by adding seating, shade, lighting, events and wraparound programming.

Larger facilities can carry a broader economic development role and serve as flagship projects to activate entire neighborhoods.

They include:

- Commissary kitchens, including those that fill a niche need
- Maker spaces
- Shared galleries
- Concert and performing arts venues
- Social clubs
- Community centers

These larger spaces can support food entrepreneurs, artisans, local brands, youth programs and neighborhood-serving organizations. They also require stronger governance, funding, operations and property control.

The third place shadow market

While many of the best third places are planned and designed as community venues, the benefits of third places are often easiest to achieve through scattered, informal activities spread throughout an entire network of community partners. Some of the most useful third-place activity happens below the radar through writing groups, music nights, workshops, meetups and affinity-group gatherings inside existing local businesses. These efforts may never appear in a grant database, but they can start quickly, prove demand and help get the larger project moving. In our experience, Instagram is often the best place to identify these organic opportunities.

SECTION

04

Third place leader interviews

LOGAN GREENE · GROUNDWORKS TUCSON
CHRIS BROCKEL · FEED KITCHENS
CARMEN CHOPP · NOMAD DEVELOPS
RACHEL DESROCHERS · INCUBATOR KITCHEN COLLECTIVE

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

Logan Greene

Groundworks — Youth arts venue and creative third place. Grassroots nonprofit in leased commercial space, Tucson, Arizona.

What were you trying to fix when you started Groundworks?

I travel as a musician quite a bit, so I've seen similar spaces around the country for the last 20 years. The thing I noticed more often than not is they would be around and awesome for one to three years, and then never heard from again after that. Sometimes for really dumb reasons. So I started doing research in 2018 to figure out what we would need to make this sustainable. I did interviews with anybody else who'd started a space, like [Trunk Space](#) up in Phoenix. I asked how they started, what they did, and I just did as much research as I could.

Why run a Kickstarter rather than look for a grant or a donor?

The one thing we knew we had wasn't access to capital. It was that we have a lot of social connections and a lot of people who are in our corner. And we specifically chose Kickstarter because we wanted it to be clear that if we didn't raise enough money, we wouldn't do this. We wouldn't feel that the community was going to be behind us to support this idea, and that's an essential part of building a space like this.

You signed a lease in January 2020. What happened?

We got a building in January of 2020, with all the foresight in the world, to start a space where a lot of people cram into a small space. So our April 3, 2020 grand opening was completely shuttered. [Groundworks ran a virtual opening instead, using real estate video tour apps to build a walkthrough of the space with links out to socially distanced recorded performances, so supporters could see what had been built with the Kickstarter money.]

How hard was the space search?

Pretty difficult. We were turned away just by being a nonprofit. We were turned away from buildings because we were brand new, we didn't have years of revenue and financial paperwork we could provide. At first it was very much whoever would answer the phone.

But we were very particular about where it was. We wanted to be central without being downtown. Somewhere parents might feel safe dropping off kids, not in the sketchiest industrial neighborhood... our space is supposed to be a place where you could

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

dip your toes into the art scene and then find out about all this other stuff going on, an entryway for a lot of young people. So accessibility becomes extra important, and that's physical accessibility, how safe it feels, stuff like that.

Did you learn anything about how to talk to landlords?

I called one place and said, hey, we're going to be doing youth concerts. And that term "concert" really has a lot of weight to it to somebody who doesn't really know what we're doing here. So we try to avoid that word when talking to landlords. We have youth and they might perform here. We do recitals, that is something we do here. I make sure it's really clear that there's live music happening, but that they know we don't have a bar, we're not like a club, we're not going to be going until all hours.

How has your programming model changed?

When we first started we really thought we would be creating more formal education opportunities. Before the COVID shutdowns we had created a series of classes, worked with teachers to build them, classes during the daytime, especially on weekends, and shows at night, and then that revenue model would be enough to pay our bills. Then any donations we get would be to grow. But what we found immediately after the pandemic was that classes were no longer a particularly interesting thing.

We never really know how it could have gone, but we do know that we had way more signups for classes before the pandemic started, and we never got to do them. We had to refund people and cancel. Then after, when we finally opened in-person and tried to build classes back into the model, we hardly got any signups. But we essentially decided to shift away from that and became a more exploratory model, where we provide an instrument library and art supplies, and we do meeting times for particular subjects so that volunteers, especially youth volunteers, can come and get that exposure and experience, or create their own art, or use our resources. We're more like giving resources for educational opportunities than the actual opportunities themselves.

What is the bottleneck on partnerships?

The problem with collaboration, especially with other art spaces and nonprofits, is around who's doing the work, who's doing that labor. We're so rich in ideas, and then seeing that idea through from just the seed of it to the actual implementation, the actual labor and resources, and everybody is so stretched thin that we all are partners in our minds, but in reality we can only do so much for each other.

The partnership opportunities that do end up happening are all around what is obvious and easy, the things that we're already doing, where all we have to do is now just attach this other thing to it, not create something from scratch.

04 – THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

What about acquiring a property?

It definitely is on the radar as a possibility. Our lease is actually up next year and we are looking into what options there are. Right at the moment we don't have a lot of really good relationships with those who might have the means to work towards buying a building, and I don't think we're quite ready to do a big capital campaign on top of the other money we need to just survive. We are doing better than simply surviving, we're still growing, but we have a long way to go before we're sustaining.

It's really hard to make the argument, not just for ourselves but to the people who have that money, of saying "Hey, we're still struggling and we're not sustainable yet, will you buy us a building?". For them it's a risky investment. We have to be able to show our financials as something that is sustainable. And it's still pretty expensive to own your own building, because now you have to learn how to maintain a building, and within our rent right now, somebody else is maintaining it.

“

We specifically chose Kickstarter because we wanted it to be clear that if we didn't raise enough money, we wouldn't do this. We wouldn't feel that the community was going to be behind us to support this idea, and that's an essential part of building a space like this.

LOGAN GREENE · GROUNDWORKS

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

Chris Brockel

FEED Kitchens — Shared commissary kitchen, food business incubation and bakery training. Nonprofit operated as part of Northside Planning Council, Madison, Wisconsin.

Tell me about your revenue model.

It's definitely a hybrid. Most of our revenue for FEED Kitchens is earned income from folks who become members here and rent kitchen time or storage space from us. We do seek and receive donations, but that's been a smaller part.

We have one major event for FEED Kitchens each year, Taste the Future. We feature 10 of our newer entrepreneurs, chosen for a variety of cuisine and a variety of representation, but mostly trying to get the newer folks who need some introduction to the community as they start their business. We do it right before the event season starts here in Madison, which is mid-April through October.

We actually give away 400 tickets, and then ask people to make donations if they appreciate it. So that that has proved to be a good money maker for us as well. We do really well with sponsorships. Also, we want the event to match our mission, which is accessibility for anybody. Here on the North Side of Madison, there are a number of low-income neighborhoods that surround us, and we want folks in those neighborhoods to be able to come. It could be the only time they get to go out to eat all year long, and they've actually told me that. I've got one

community center that brings a vanload of people.

And then finally we have a bakery here. We do a bakery training program that we've traditionally offered as free training for unemployed and underemployed folks, and then we operate a bakery that is meant to fund the training. The bakery is doing so well right now, we have multiple wholesale outlets and we are now paying our students as interns. They're not getting rich, they're getting paid \$12 an hour to attend a class to learn about 12 to 15 hours a week, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings. They also get ServSafe instruction and certification, and job-seeking support. The bakery does so well that it also supports FEED Kitchens. When I look at our programming, if FEED Kitchens is operating at a loss and the bakery is operating at a gain, as long as those two zero each other out, I feel pretty good. That's where we're at right now.

Why not fund this with grants?

We don't get a lot of grants. There's just not a lot out there for entrepreneurship. There are food system grants, but generally those want you to quantify it, take a local food that's being grown, such as peas, convert that into a finished product, and tell them

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

how many pounds you're going to take from a farm and make into a product. We have 85 different users. I have really no way of knowing how many pounds of peas any single one of them is going to use. We have an economic development corporation here in Wisconsin. They've invited me four times to apply for an entrepreneurship partnership grant. All four times I've been rejected. I feel like Charlie Brown with Lucy holding the football.

So the first thing I tell people who come look at the place is, get your economic development people behind you before you start building or putting a project together. I wasn't here when this place opened 13 years ago, but they were so confident it was going to do well that they never sought any sort of baseline government support.

How do you estimate demand for a space like this?

We've been here 13 years and we are operating at capacity. I keep track of the number of people who reach out wanting to look for space to start a business. Since last May 1, so a little over 13 months, we have had 220 inquiries. That could be anyone from "Hey, I'm just investigating," to "Hey, if you can get me in here tomorrow I'm ready to start," and probably more of the latter, because most entrepreneurs don't plan ahead. They're like, hey, I've been thinking about this and now I want to go. So demand is way higher than we can even handle. I don't even know how to assess demand, to be honest with you, it's so big.

Why is food the entry point for so many of them?

Certainly with immigrant populations and low-income populations, the production of food is probably one of the easiest-to-access things if they want to take control of their lives. A lot of immigrants want to share their culture; they want to share their food. I think people find it unique, and it's one of the things they can actually do without having to learn a whole lot of English. The other reality is that if they've been in the United States for a while, or if you're a low-income person, there's a good chance you've been working in the back of a restaurant, so you know how to cook, you know how to operate. So we see a lot of people who are just like, "I need to take control of my own life, I'm done working for somebody else, I know how to cook, I want to run a business." For a lot of people here, it's the how do I run a business part [that's missing.]

What is your hardest physical constraint?

The limiting factor for us is cold storage. We're a 24/7 facility, but what we have for cold storage is what we have. We're a standalone building in a strip mall parking lot surrounded by parking we don't own, in a commercially zoned area. We approached the city of Madison about putting in an external freezer to expand capacity, and basically it's almost a no-go. A lot of hoops to jump through. We could do it, but that means getting permission from the landlord to dig up some parking spots because they want to see more pervious surface so there's not

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

rainwater runoff, and it's got to meet certain specs about external appearance. They pretty much made it impossible.

Looking back 13 years, if I were here building and knowing all that, I'd say let's not put ourselves in a small parking lot, let's find some industrial-zoned area, and then we can do what we want to do. But here we are. This is where we are.

Could a shared kitchen be mobile?

I think that could have legs. In the city of Madison, until about eight years ago, food carts were limited to an eight-by-seven base, these little wooden structures that one person can stand in. Then they decided to let the big trailers come in, and those are the kitchens on wheels. They can get licensed to do all their production on the trailer itself, because it has all the elements of a kitchen. I had a guy come in this morning with an 18-foot trailer that's almost as big as one of our kitchens here. It can be licensed as a mobile trailer and as a transient vendor, meaning you can move around and do different events. So why not move it around as a kitchen as well, and people can access it in different spaces. The hard part, of course, is the scheduling piece.

What would you warn someone about before they open a shared kitchen?

I always say, be careful, because you're gonna grab a tiger by the tail, and you're not going to realize it until he's whipping you around. These things have a life of their own. Entrepreneurs are wonderful people, but

they are driven and focused on their own business, so a lot of times we're doing a lot of correction here. We set a very good culture of cooperation and graciousness and patience, but it's cleaning up after yourself, food safety issues. Where do I store things? How do I store them properly, getting them all to do it right in a shared space that's really busy? One person does the wrong thing, other people see it and say, well, if they can get away with it, I can get away with it, and suddenly it can snowball.

So the big thing for me is, if you're opening a space, be really tight with your rules and regulations about how that space is used, and be ready to set a culture of acceptance, diversity, sharing, and graciousness. Everyone moving together. That works out pretty well. Here we really don't have a lot of problems with people not getting along.

“

The first thing I tell people who come look at the place is, get your economic development people behind you before you start building or putting a project together.

CHRIS BROCKEL · FEED KITCHENS

HISTORIC PARKROSE · THIRD PLACES

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

Carmen Chopp

Nomad Develops — Public markets, food halls, local operators and mixed-use development. Brokerage, development, management and marketing firm, Kansas City. Previously ran Lenexa Public Market.

What separates a public market from a food hall?

These spaces need to make money. That's true. But sometimes those rent rates and rent structures aren't friendly to your traditional food hall, aren't friendly to the local small single operator, the person who's selling tamales out of their trunk right now.

The money piece has to work, but that community space, if you can create the environment, then the money piece takes care of itself. In order to do that you have to very specifically curate those people, make sure they understand the mission, make sure they're willing to operate within that mission, make sure they have the capacity financially to operate. And one of the ways to do that is to create different opportunities for people to engage and operate in that space at different levels.

In a traditional food hall you're kind of sticking operators in there under one model. A public market really has those different levels. There's room for a local operator who's maybe on their third concept or second location, but you also have opportunities for pop-ups and incubator-type tenants that you support more, where the rent rates are lower and the requirements are lower. It's that kind of mix that

helps in terms of accessibility and makes people on the community side feel like they see people who are like them operating in there. That's one of the secret sauces to making it work.

What makes a public-private partnership work?

It's always to have the right people at the table. That sounds stupid to say, I think that's obvious, but it really does take it. I've now worked on probably five or six of these public spaces after Lenexa, all with very different structures, and what I would tell you is that the single ingredient is having the right person on the other side of the table.

How much groundwork and connections does a community need before something like this is possible?

Hire the people who have them. That's why people come to us. We only do restaurant and retail brokerage work. We're a full-service company, from brokerage to development to management and marketing, the whole life cycle for these types of spaces. If somebody wants to know what is

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

happening in the food scene in Kansas City, they come to us. We're one of probably less than a handful. And when I say the food scene, I'm not talking about the big brokerage companies who deal in national chains and put Paneras and Taco Bells in there. We deal in local operators and that's it.

What is the smallest a food stall can be?

It depends on what you're doing, obviously, as to whether or not you need a hood system. But really, even that is like 80 to 100 square feet. Depending on what you're doing, you can push quite a bit of product out of that. Think about a food truck. And the other thing I would do is, with that 80 to 100 square feet, that's just your production space. So put a service window in and go that way.

What about operators who need to produce at volume?

That's actually what we're building into. We're building a bigger one out in the Historic Northeast market, a production kitchen, so our tenants who have the smaller spaces and can't produce at scale in their space can use it. It's completely fit out with most of the equipment they'd need. If there's any real specialty equipment they'd have to provide that. It's a benefit to our incubator stalls and our midsized stalls. Most of the bigger stalls are about 750 square feet in the market, but the incubator stalls are like 250 square feet.

How do you explain demand to a real estate partner?

We do a full pro forma, usually five years. We've never been asked to do longer than that, and if somebody asked me to, I would push back on it, because you really don't know what it will grow into. You can kind of calculate stability, when it stabilizes, three or four years. But after that it kind of takes on a life of its own. We had years where we had 35 percent growth year over year; we had years where it was 17 percent. We really just didn't know, but it grew every year and it continues to grow. If I look at markets like Milwaukee Public Market or Reading Terminal Market, markets that have been around a really long time, they just continue to grow. A lot of it has to do with management, marketing, the ongoing day-in and day-out, a management team that understands the mission and continues to push that forward.

“

In a traditional food hall you're kind of sticking operators in there under one model. A public market really has those different levels. There's room for a local operator who's maybe on their third concept or second location, but you also have opportunities for pop-ups and incubator-type tenants that you support more, where the rent rates are lower and the requirements are lower.

CARMEN CHOPP · NOMAD DEVELOPS

HISTORIC PARKROSE · THIRD PLACES

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

Rachel DesRochers

Incubator Kitchen Collective — Shared incubator kitchen and food entrepreneurship nonprofit, Cincinnati, Ohio. Founded by the owner of cookie company Grateful Grahams

Why food?

Food to me is where community comes from. It doesn't matter what you believe, it doesn't matter what your socioeconomic status is. It is the one thing that can unite a community faster and better than anything else, because it doesn't matter how you pray, we all know what breaking bread is. So I'm coming and operating through that lens, not through look at this cool thing that's so innovative.

How do you describe the mission of the incubator?

This is year 13. We've helped over 225 food startups. The mission has always been healthy people build healthy businesses. It's not about how do we help more. It's about making sure that if we're building these communities and these ecosystems, we make sure the human is factored into that, not just the founder and the entrepreneur. The people matter. We're all tired, we're all burned out.

How did you get the kitchen?

I started it because I was doing my graham crackers and we were doing six farmers markets a week, and

I realized there were a lot of me's out there and there wasn't anything here regionally to collect us all. So I had my own space that I was operating Grateful Grahams out of, and I literally just opened the doors and said, hey, we're in this facility Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, eight to two, but if anybody needs space outside of that, nominal fees. Because I know food entrepreneurs have no money.

Then I looked at a 4,000 square foot facility that ran a Meals on Wheels program. Back in the day Meals on Wheels was a from-scratch kitchen program, and it's now converted to a frozen meal program, so the kitchen was sitting empty. I first looked at it in January of 2013 and I went to the guy running it and said, "Hey, your kitchen's empty, what do you want for it?" But I didn't really have any money, and it was too big.

Six months later I called him back and said, is your kitchen still empty? He said yeah. And I said, good, now you need me, and I have the idea. Would you be willing to do a rent split with me? I need somebody to give me a chance. I've got an idea and I know it will help a lot of people. And he said, Rachel, I need a base rate, and I'll split with you from there. So we negotiated. Maybe he got \$1,000 a month, and then

04 — THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

he took half my rent. It was a hefty split, because it's never been about the money, it's always been about the work.

Later our building got sold...I knew a restaurant group had closed a 10,000 square foot commissary that was sitting empty, so I called and said, "Hey, we need a kitchen." That's where we are right now. So I've built very differently. I didn't take on debt.

Can an incubator fix main street?

Every city person I've ever met who sees the incubator says "Oh my god, you're going to solve our main street problems." In 13 years of running a kitchen, let me tell you, I've never once solved a main street problem. That's not how it works, and I love telling the people in the city that.

You've got a bigger problem that has to get solved, and that is stabilization of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. These guys aren't making enough money to pay themselves, let alone incubate and solve your problem, because you're not creating a system so that they can solve their problem with you. There has to be a dance.

What surprised you about actually managing the space?

One thing I learned is that entrepreneurs like to do it their own way, and so I am not their savior and I'm not their mom. All I can do is ask, okay, what can we do, and then who do we work with?

One of the things I know is that we are not an

accelerator, and I'm not going to create accelerator programming. What I can do is look at the 12 accelerators we already have that are doing great work and receiving stable funding, and figure out how they can come in and be a partner with me. So I built through-lines of partnerships. We have done a monthly "ask-an-expert." A marketing expert coming in today, if you want to talk marketing. Or finance. It's a way for your accelerators to come in, a way for your bank partner to have a seat at the table, a way for your VC firm to have a seat. You lean on your community to build your program.

Do competing food businesses in one kitchen cause problems?

When I first opened the incubator I had my own cookie company, and I realized that if my second company was going to be successful, I had to rent to other bakers. So I could set the tone of I have the best cookie, or I could set the tone that I'm doing my best and there's plenty of room for you to come in and do your best. Out of 45 companies, I wouldn't be surprised if 15 of them bake something. I'm old school, if you think your cookie is the best one, you need to grow up. There are a lot of cookies on the market.

What I do dance around is logistics. We have a couple of meal prep companies that do high volume, and I can't bring another high-volume meal prep company in. But that's operations, that's equipment access, your refrigeration, the freezer.

04 – THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

Is cold storage a bottleneck for you too?

You always need more refrigeration and freezer. And you're going to have people who don't need kitchen space but who need that, so you could solve a bigger issue there.

Why do you think third spaces matter right now?

Every conversation I've had for probably the last 18 months in my organizations and in my communities is about this, and my language for it is taking it back to basics. Low-tech. Humans need third spaces now more than ever. We need space to connect in, we need human interaction,...I'm an old-school grassroots marketer, so I know the importance of these third spaces. I've been building them for 25 years and I've never stopped building them.

“

In 13 years of running a kitchen, let me tell you, I've never once solved a main street problem. That's not how it works, and I love telling the people in the city that.

You've got a bigger problem that has to get solved, and that is stabilization of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

RACHEL DESROCHERS · INCUBATOR KITCHEN COLLECTIVE

04 – THIRD PLACE LEADER INTERVIEWS

Case study takeaways

01 Start with the space you control, not the space of your dreams. Groundworks was turned away from buildings simply for being a new nonprofit without years of financial records. A room you control for part of the week now beats a building you may or may not have to yourself tomorrow.

02 Use early programming to demonstrate demand, and your revenue model with it. Even if you have to pivot with your offering, having a foundation of data to draw from can make all the difference.

03 Demand may be your biggest success signal, but it can lead to capacity issues. Don't spend all your time planning to face lukewarm demand only to wind up limited with a busy space capped by the availability of cold storage, not demand.

04 Working with entrepreneurs comes with big benefits but some challenges too. Learning how to manage strong personalities goes a long way.

05 Diversifying revenue streams can dramatically reduce risk...and felt pressure for space operators. By the same token, start your networking with local economic development professionals early.

SECTION

05

Conclusion

IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS

Conclusion

Parkrose should begin to act on two tracks at once: create visible community activity now, and build the foundation for a larger improvement over time. The first track produces momentum, trust and proof of demand. The second prepares stakeholders for the property, funding, and partnership work needed for a more substantial community space investment.

CATALYZE NOW

The immediate priority we recommend is to identify the easiest space Parkrose can activate in the next two to three months. The search should be expansive. The strongest candidates may include the existing Parkrose office or community rooms, the street plaza, a partner-owned storefront, a grocery-adjacent space, an underused parking lot, a food cart area, a faith or nonprofit space, or another property whose owner is open to short-term community use.

The goal is to keep people gathering and continue to highlight the idea that “Parkrose means community.” A market, youth activity, food-centered event, small performance on a recurring basis, neighborhood workshop, cleanup day, outdoor movie, cultural event, or pop-up retail program can begin to show what residents respond to even if space itself cannot be guaranteed. There is no single correct format for a community space, and no idea is too “out there” if it matches local demand and can be tested safely.

PUSH TOWARD A BIGGER WIN

At the same time, Parkrose should build the groundwork for a more lasting project. The long-term needs residents identified - a safer Sandy Boulevard, more youth space, more services, more programming, better outdoor access and a stronger mix of neighborhood-serving businesses - will take more than a one-off event or even a semi-consistent programming series to truly take hold.

This work should include continued conversations with economic development partners, public agencies and property owners; a review of grant opportunities; and a closer look at what kinds of space would best fit Parkrose. Food entrepreneurship is one path we recommend from our research. Artisan production space, collaborative workshop facilities, pop-up retail, or similar venues anchored by programs connected to Parkrose’s existing industrial and automotive base and property industry may be another.



[SAYCOLONNADE.COM](https://saycolonnade.com)