THE CHALLENGE

Meow Wolf, a world-renowned arts and entertainment company based in Santa Fe, is set to open its newest exhibition space at 1338 1st Street in Denver in late 2021. The immersive, interactive art exhibition is expected to draw between 7,000 and 7,500 visitors per day, or roughly 2.5 – 2.7 million per year.

Meow Wolf’s challenge is two-fold. First, how to accommodate the traffic flow and parking requirements of their visitors; and two, how to mitigate impacts on the surrounding community.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to develop recommendations for how Meow Wolf Denver can creatively reduce traffic and parking impacts on the Sun Valley neighborhood while improving accessibility and connectivity. To prevent the gentrification that often accompanies investment in the public realm, this project focuses specifically on recommendations that partner with, benefit, and engage the local community.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

My research focused on how community-led creative placemaking can improve the pedestrian environment.

Creative placemaking is a collaborative, people-centered approach to the planning and design of public space that uses arts and cultural activities to enhance the physical and social character of an area.

This approach is focused on what makes each community unique and strives for authentic community engagement so that the resulting urban design reflects and celebrates existing culture, character, and other distinctive community assets.

CASE STUDIES

WAYFINDING THROUGH PUBLIC ART

40 WEST ART LINE - A 4 mile long interactive biking and pedestrian art experience located in the 40 West Arts District in Lakewood, CO

INTERSECTION REPAIR & TRAFFIC CALMING

CHICANO PARK - A world-renowned park built underneath a highway containing over 80 colorful murals celebrating Chicano and Mexican History in San Diego, CA

EXISTING CONDITIONS

TRANSIT ACCESS BY THE NUMBERS

Multi-use Trails

- 5 Multi-use Trails

- 3 Light Rail Stations

- 11 Bus Routes

- 47 WalkScore

At first glance, it would seem the Meow Wolf site is well positioned to take advantage of nearby public transit options. However, proximity to transit does not necessarily make transit a convenient or appealing option for Meow Wolf’s employees and visitors.

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT AND INTERSECTION QUALITY ON KEY PATHS TO MEOW WOLF FROM NEARBY LIGHT RAIL STATIONS

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT QUALITY

INTERSECTION QUALITY

Good Pedestrian Environment

Fair Pedestrian Environment

Poor Pedestrian Environment

Worst Pedestrian Environment

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A poor-quality pedestrian environment discourages people from walking in this area
- Factors contributing to the lack of walkability are: large parking lots, poor urban design quality, lack of wayfinding, lack of pedestrian amenities, lack of pedestrian-scale lighting, poor intersection quality, and a perception of danger

VISION & GOALS

Through engaged community-led creative placemaking, Meow Wolf and its community partners will transform the functional infrastructure of the street to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle mobility, creating street-level experiences that invite and stimulate visitors and passersby.

The recommendations in this report are informed by four key goals:

SAFE & ACCESSIBLE

- All people regardless of age, ability, or means of transportation should feel safe and comfortable

UNIQUE & COMMUNITY-BASED

- Existing culture, character, and other distinctive community assets should be respected and celebrated

ACTIVE & INVITING

- An attractive, high-quality urban environment filled with interesting art and activities invites people to explore

ENGAGING & IMMERSIVE

- Colorful, interactive art experiences create an exciting and memorable journey for Meow Wolf’s visitors and community members alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WAYFINDING & NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Implement a comprehensive wayfinding & signage program

- Create a high-quality neighborhood arts trail

- Invest in a wayfinding app & digital communications

IMPROVED INTERSECTIONS & STREETSCAPING

- Support design enhancements at priority intersections

- Implement a community-based intersection repair program

- Provide enhanced pedestrian and wheelchair amenities on priority streets

COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC ART

- Support the creation of community-led public art

- Establish an Under the Viaduct Arts program

BICYCLE & MICROMOBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

- Provide dedicated space for shared micromobility options

- Support efforts to improve and expand Denver’s bicycle facilities

SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

- Add additional pedestrian-scale lighting

- Add emergency phone towers along key pedestrian paths

- Work to reduce littering & remove trash from pedestrian paths

PROJECT COMPLETED BY

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"Chicago 2050: OUR CITY. OUR PLANNING."