

Ping Pong Parkway

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This installation is an effort to activate a highly visible yet rarely utilized site along Campus Parkway. While the site is prominent and the design provides an open forum for democratic process (i.e. a speaker's podium), there was no hook, no invitation into the space. Our team installed two ping pong tables, complete with balls and paddles, in an attempt to draw people in and engage them first in a game, and then ultimately with the site's existing features.

Situated among student residences, the median's substantial open space would seem a welcome opportunity for both active and passive recreation. The site, however, is often very loud with bus traffic. It was designed for passive use, but the noise and smells create an unpleasant and even aggressive environment. There is little opportunity for the user to shape or personalize this space – she could hardly carry on a comfortable conversation. The energy, the noise, and the communication all flowed in one direction – at the user. Even the benches were speaking to her, with the noise crowding out any opportunity for her to engage or speak back.



Open plaza yearning for social interactions.



Inspirations from Copenhagen.



Serving the student body.



Paddle chandelier.



Ping pong nest.

Ping pong is thus conceived of as an invitation to converse, through movement and play, with other users and the site, and to personalize it with a game. The installation responds also to the lack of opportunities for outdoor recreation within the University District. Recognizing a commonly-held fear of vandalism or theft of public amenities, the team designed details that encourage stewardship of the site by having designated spots that are understood as incomplete without their accompanying ball or paddle. Each ball has a nest; each paddle, a clip. At the end of a game, the user is invited to contribute to the order and beauty of the space by returning all parts to their proper place.



What do YOU think?



Family fun in the University District.



Ping pong match on a sunny day.