



ACTIVE DESIGN SCHOOLYARD IN BROWNSVILLE
STREET LAB

About Active Design for a Brownsville School Yard:

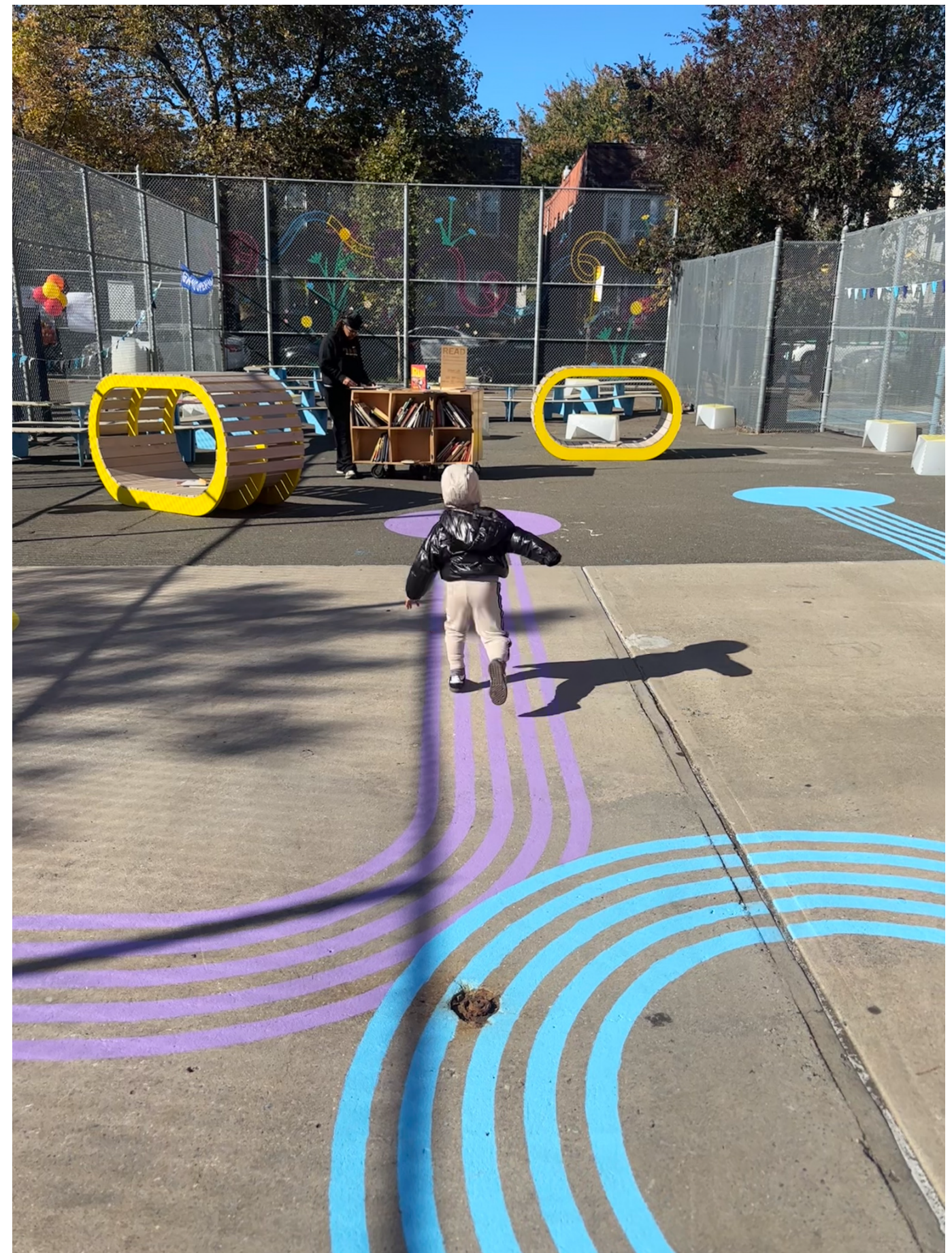
Street Lab was approached by long-time active design and community engagement partners about designing a new school yard at the Riverdale Avenue Community School, a kindergarten through sixth grade school co-located with a middle school. This school is part of NYC's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Active Design in Schools initiative, a project dedicated to expanding opportunities for physical activity, outdoor learning, and wellness in partnership with the Department of Education. The redesign transforms a previously underused outdoor area into a flexible, high-impact environment that supports learning, play, and community connection throughout the school day and year.

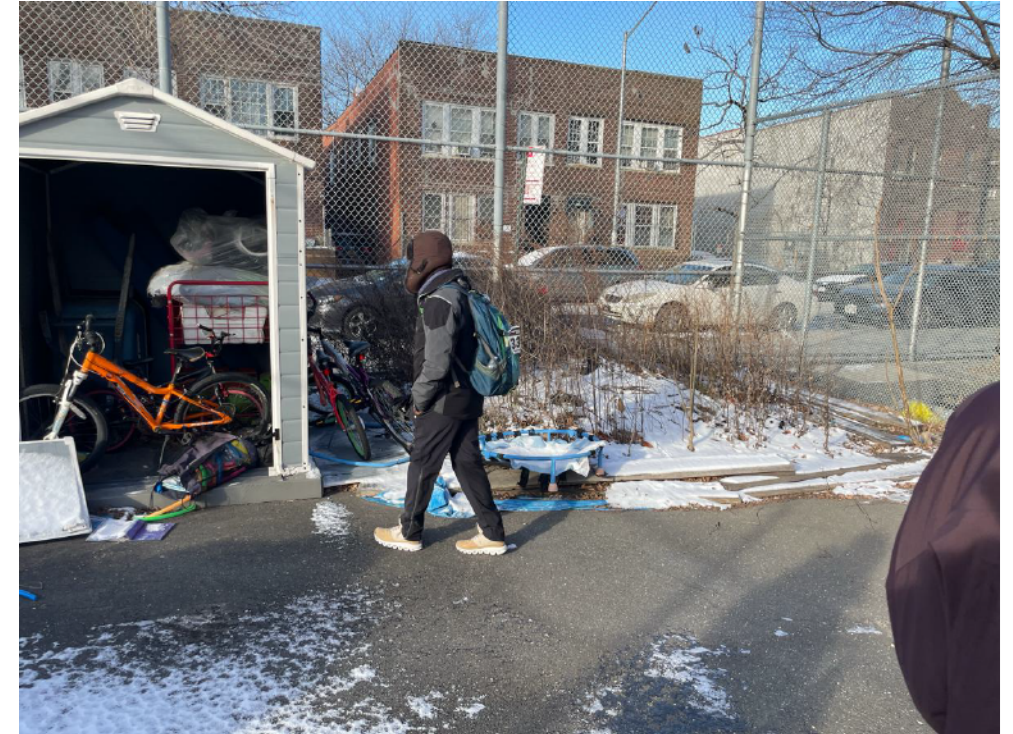
Community engagement informed every phase of the project. Early listening and visioning sessions were facilitated by our engagement partner Equity Design with students, teachers, staff, and families and the sessions helped identify how the school community envisioned using the space, desired features, and aspirations for the yard. Our studio then developed the design, which the school refined by combining preferred elements from several concepts. Continuous dialogue ensured that the final design responded directly to community priorities, creating a space that reflects lived experiences and everyday needs.

The resulting design emphasizes flexibility, activity, and accessibility. Modular benches serve as picnic tables, multi-height bleachers, and classroom seating, supporting diverse uses without requiring additional resources. Play pods provide climbing and lounging opportunities, creating informal social hubs that encourage movement and imagination. A bold ground mural unifies the space while creating pathways for games, structured activities, and self-directed exploration. The furniture is movable and can also be used to activate the adjacent Open Street which our studio helps to operate on Fridays during the school year.

By integrating adaptable design, active programming, and deep engagement, Active Design for a Brownsville School Yard has transformed an underutilized space into a vibrant, multifunctional resource and source of pride. The schoolyard now supports learning, wellness, and recreation, strengthening connections among students, educators, and families while creating an enduring model for flexible, community-centered school design.

This document follows our process through community engagement, design, prototyping, fabrication, installation and finally use of the school yard.

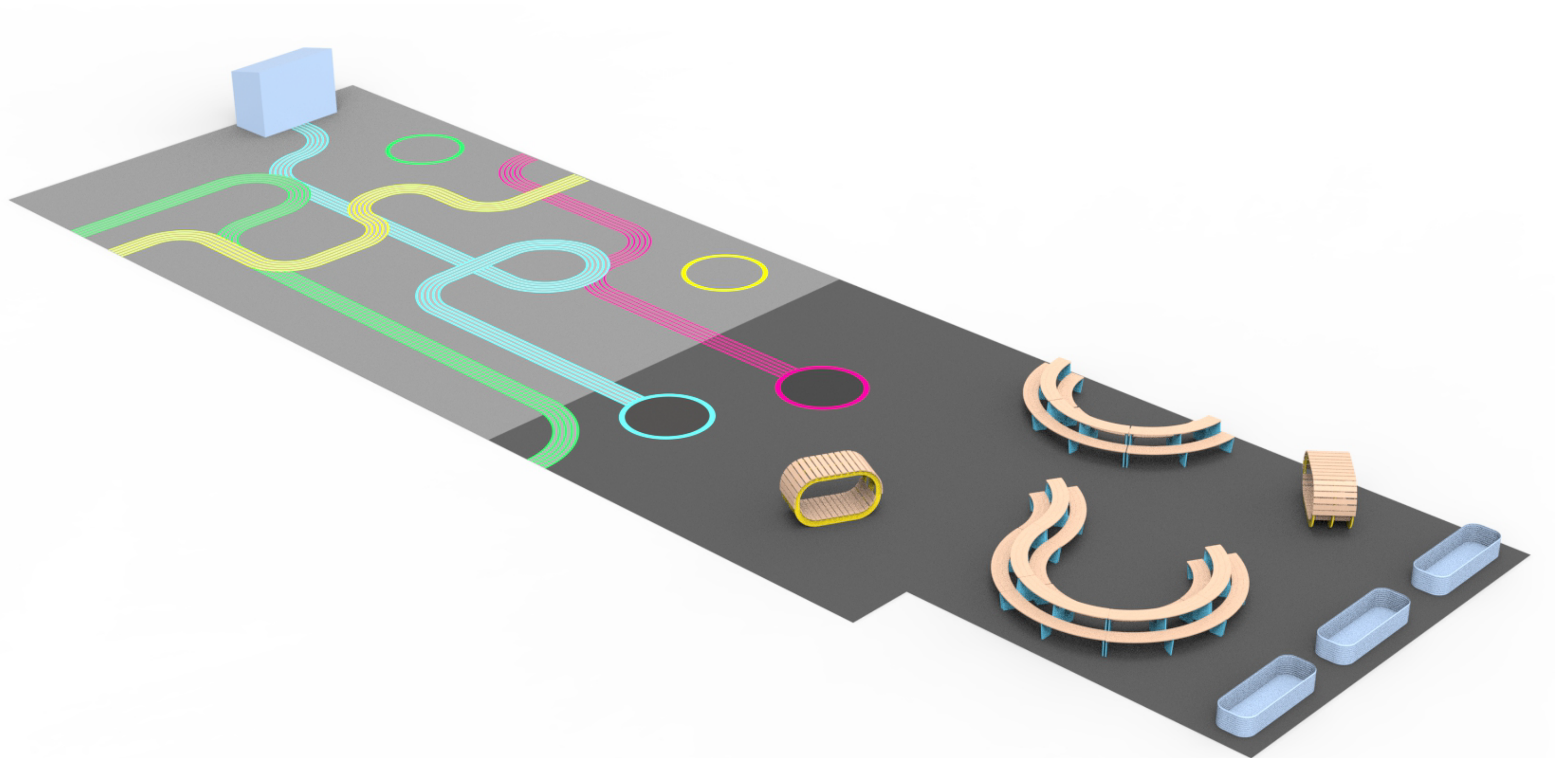




Initial site visit.



School community members participate in listening and visioning workshops.



Concept plan includes modular furniture and a mural.



Rendering of schoolyard concept



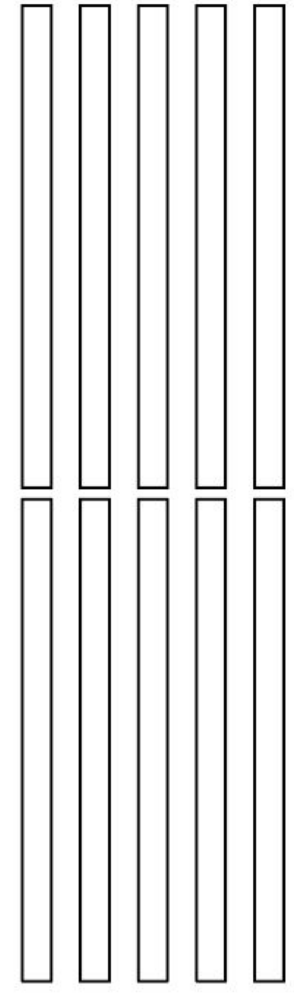
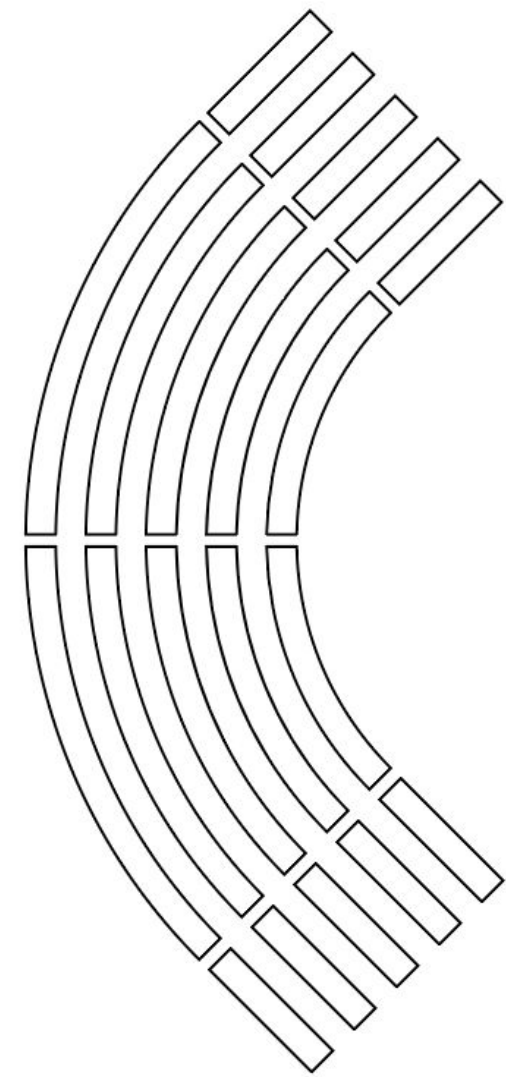
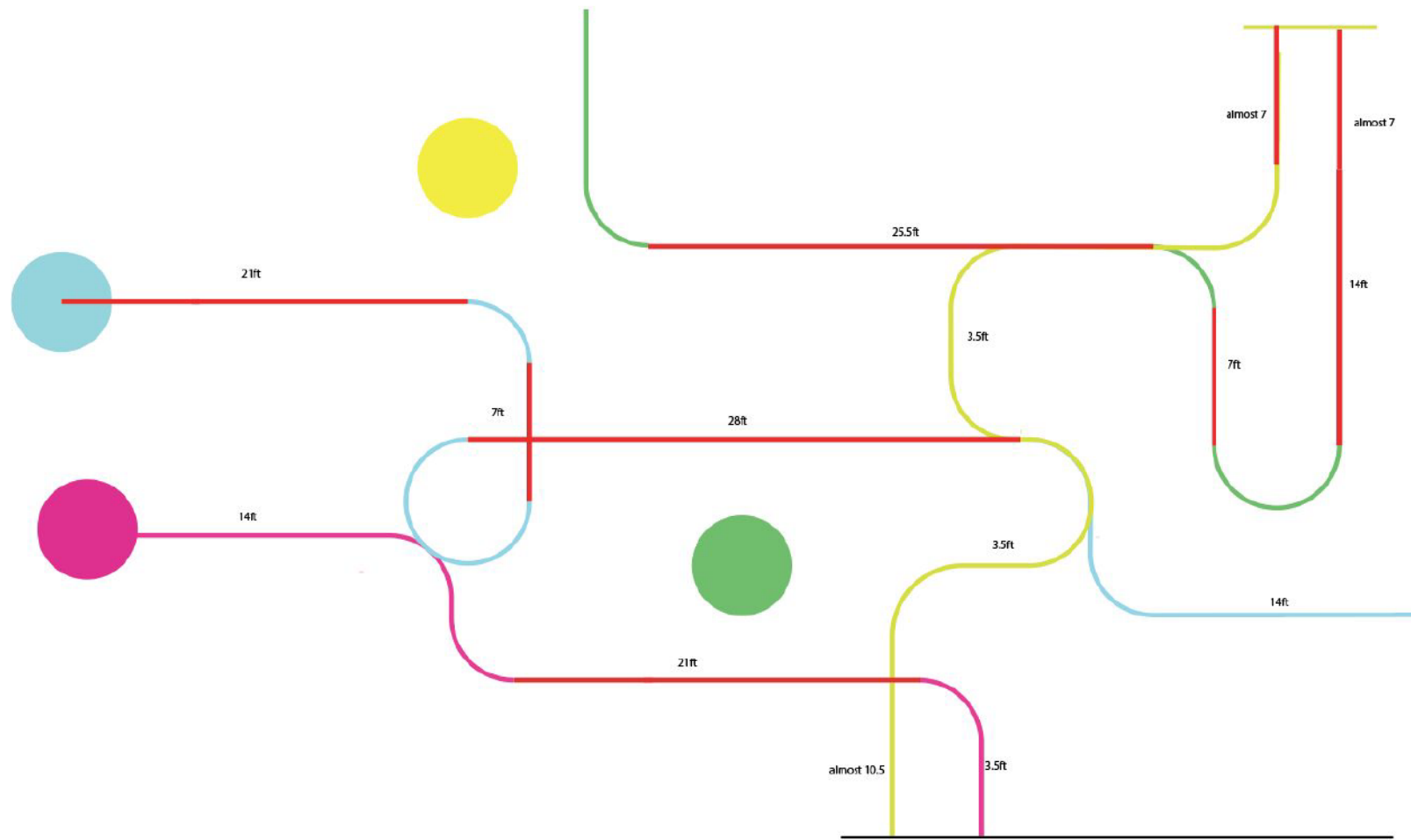
Prototyping process of modular benches optimizing stability and material use.



Finalized production pieces ready to install.



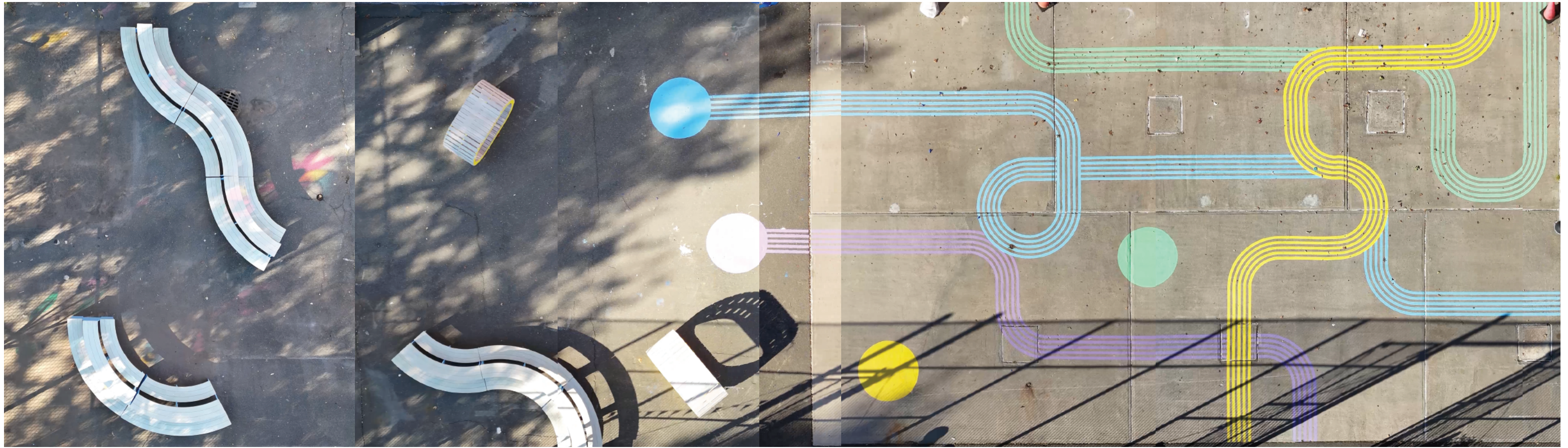
Our team preparing the site and mapping the mural in chalk.



Mural optimization for stencil size and site.



Our team painting the mural using stencils



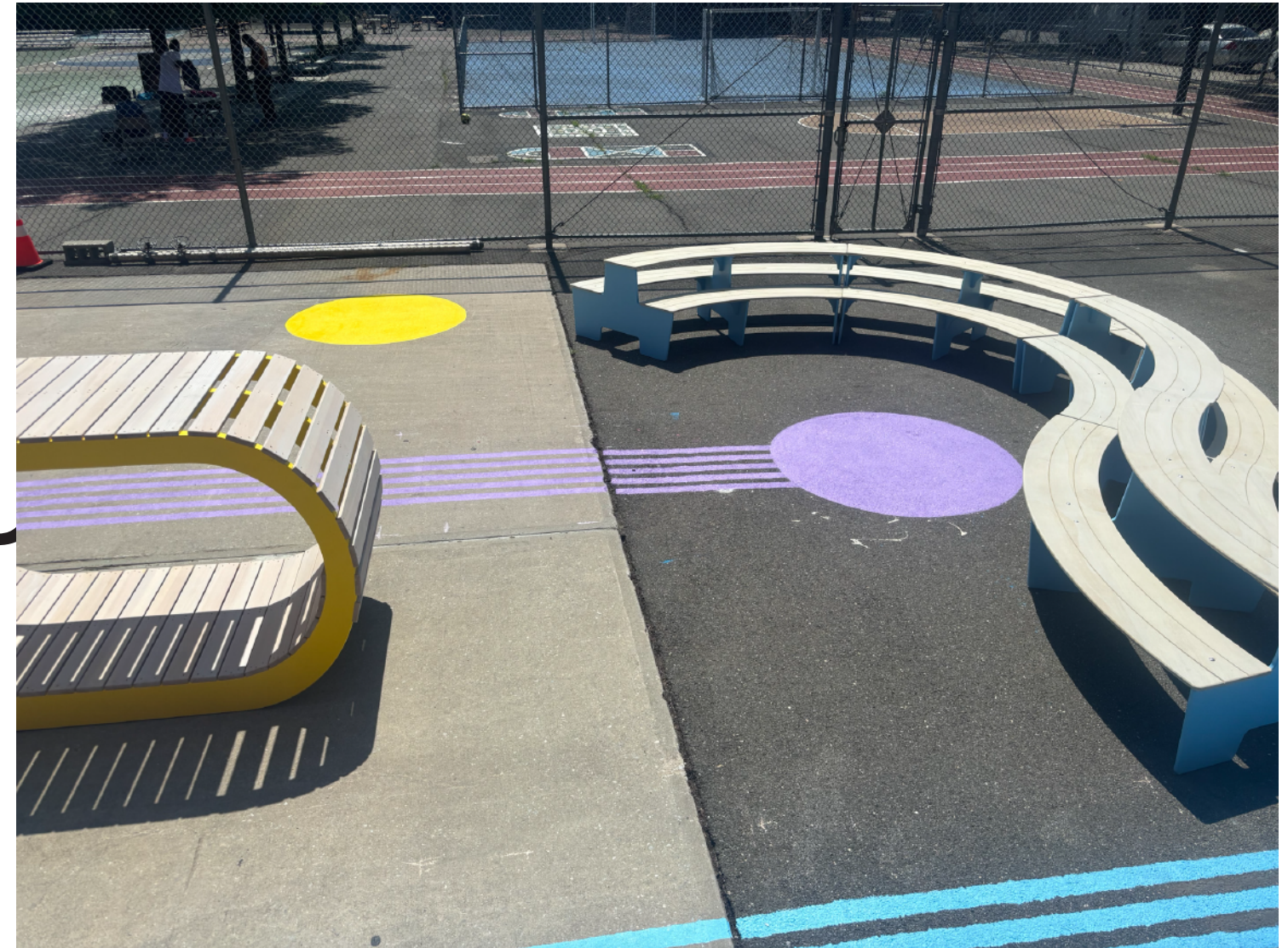
composite image from drone footage



The mural is designed to adapt to different movement games and uses and can be customized with chalk.



Furniture elements installed at school site.



Furniture elements can be easily moved around the site to create different configurations and uses.



School students enjoying the site for both play and learning.