Philadelphia’s schoolyards represent the second largest collection of publicly owned land in the city. They are a patchwork of weeds, crumbling concrete walks, rusted playground equipment and lonely basketball hoops astride a sea of cracked asphalt. Their visual cues signal decay and disinvestment and reflect harshly on the character of the communities they serve.

Knight Cities Innovation Grant. J. Gaffigan. 14’

City Infrastructure - In June of 2011 the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) launched Green City, Clean Waters, a $2 billion 25 - year plan to protect and enhance Philadelphia’s watersheds. It is the first city to receive approval from the Environmental Protection Agency to implement this type of program.

Philadelphia Schools - As part of this plan PWD intends to create 550 Green Acres at approximately 300 schoolyards by 2036. This equates to 13 schoolyards per year. The K-8 schoolyard is a strategic opportunity to expose school children and neighborhood residents on a daily basis to green stormwater infrastructure improvements (GSI). It is this kind of exposure that can lead to long term changes in popular attitudes towards stormwater issues. As the Philadelphia Water begins efforts to reduce storm water, greening schoolyards is an excellent opportunity to provide leverage to develop a larger innovative schoolyard model that supports the use of schoolyards as effective community and recreation resources by designing and implementing effective play and learning spaces critical to addressing child and community health.

The Philadelphia Schoolyard Redevelopment Collaborative, a newly developed public/private entrepreneurial collaborative seeks to reinvent Philadelphia’s elementary schoolyard as common ground that mutually respects issues of aesthetics, maintenance, safety, recreation, and education and achieves the following aims:

- Provide green infrastructure for the comibled sewer systems and reduce stormwater runoff.
- Plan, design and construct schoolyards for healthy living – lively actively and eat healthy.
- Increase children’s exposure to play places.
- Create community connections and opportunities through participation and leadership.
- Increase children’s awareness and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Big SandBox as lead organization will guide the community participation effort and fund raising effort. Learning Landscapes/Anschutz Center for Health and Wellness will provide a holistic platform for schoolyard design weaving educational, social, play and healthy elements into a multigenerational environment for the school and community. The Philadelphia Water Department, City, and School District will be vital partners in scaling this effort through out Philadelphia.
**Studio Project: North Philadelphia Schools Coalition** This fall the UCD studio will launch the collaborative eight schools in the city. As such is will be a hybrid studio by developing a comprehensive Campus Redevelopment Plan – Studio Products:

- Campus Master Plan for Improvements
- Illustrative Campus Vision
- Phase One DD drawings (CAD) with cost estimate

A key aspect of the studio is integrating research, design theory, social and behavioral theories and contemporary use of materials. Research has proven that conflicts occur between the desires of children and the disdain of adults in the construction of playgrounds. As example, previous loose parts and adventure playgrounds successfully created challenging and inventive places only to have complaints of maintenance and visual appearance result in yet another failed playground idea. Therefore inventiveness and the exploration of non-traditional design elements will be a vital part of this studio. Experiencing the schoolyard environment is essential for the graduate student and each student will be required to participate in one site visit to Chicago during the community engagement process.

**REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The studio environment is a key component of the studio experience. Sharing ideas with fellow students is invaluable. Students are expected to be in studio during the entire studio period. The instructor must always be notified if a student is not going to be in studio or is leaving early or late. Students who are unable to attend specific classes due to illness, family hardship or religious holidays must notify the teacher in writing within the first two weeks of the semester. Failure to do so will result in the absence being considered unexcused, and bring a grade reduction. The unorthodox nature of this studio relies heavily on a student’s ability to be self-directed and can be extremely rewarding. However, meetings with the school, children and community groups outside of studio require a personal commitment.

The studio will plan at least one trip to Philadelphia. Funding options for this are still being explored.