

# Graphic Skills Portal

## Technique Handouts

# 3

## DESIGNING



**Creating a public  
realm proposal using  
Illustrator**

**URBAN  
GRAPHICS  
SKILLS**

# What is a Public Realm Proposal?

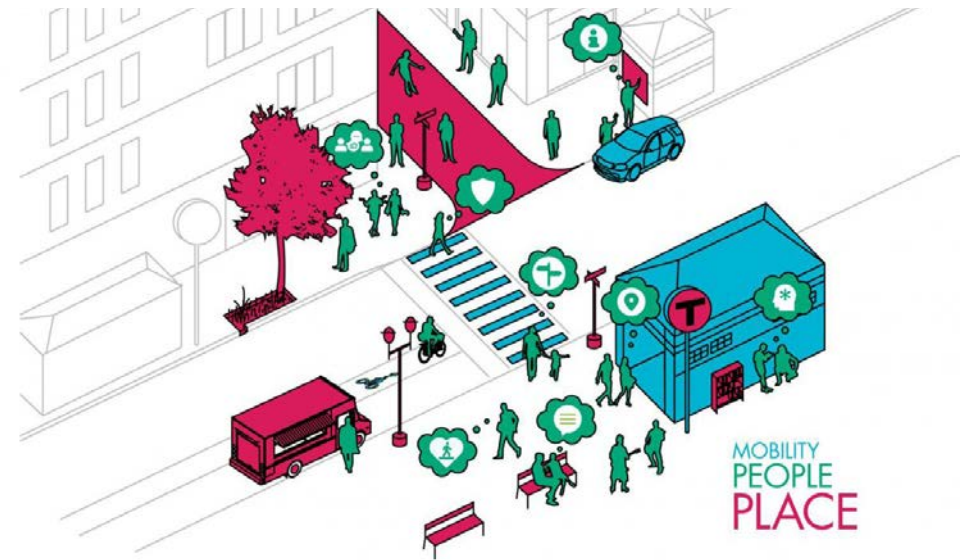
A public realm proposal primarily consists of the roadways, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and other open spaces that comprise the arteries and focal points of the urban framework. It is the main space where civic interaction occurs and is often defined in contrast to private property.

It may include:

- Plan representations
- Bird's eye into specific areas



Rethinking roundabout designs with green infrastructure.  
Images Sourced from Eric Hallquist, Director of Landscape Architecture, Aecom



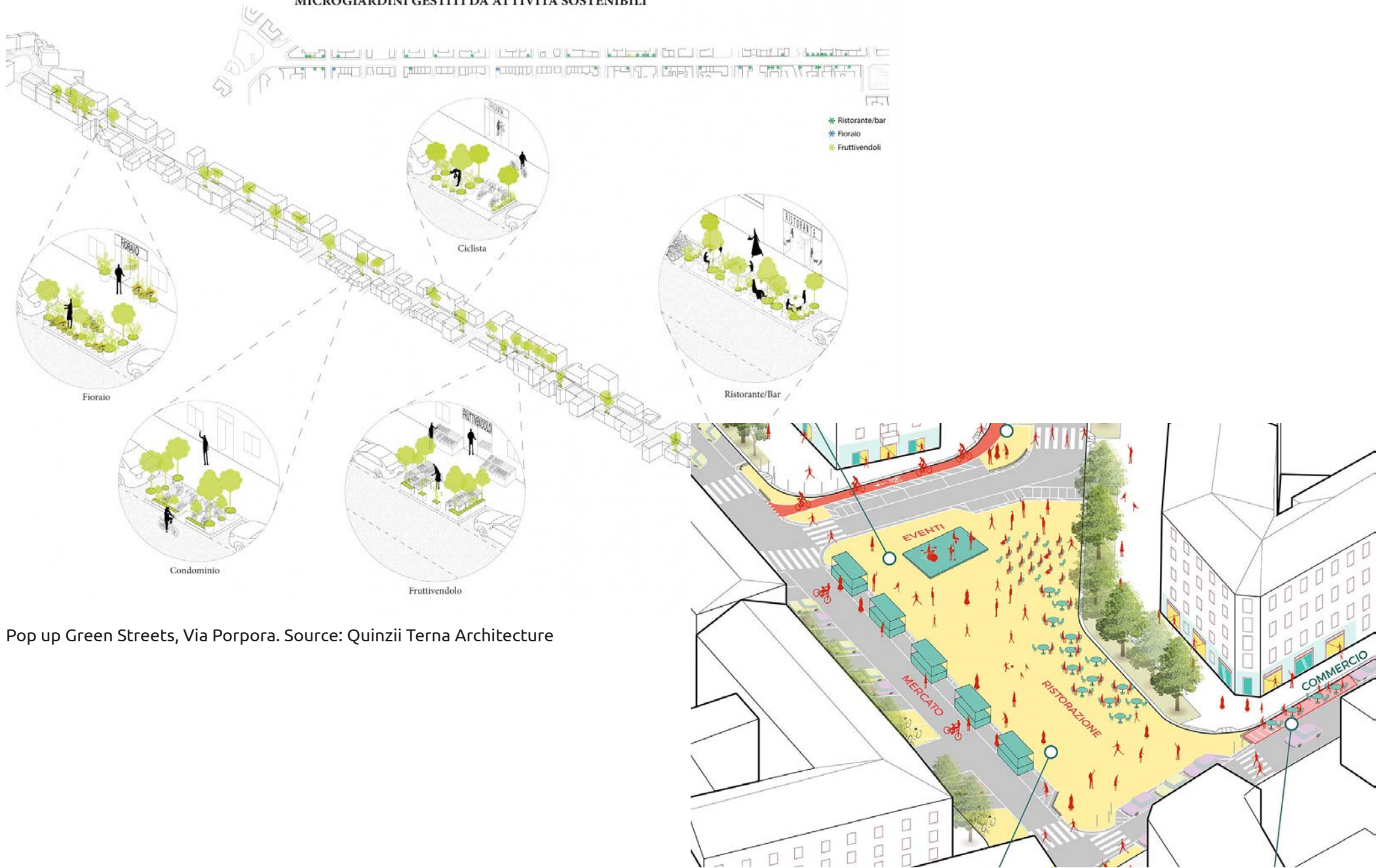
Graphic for Guide to Placemaking for Mobility. Source: Stantec.



Public Realm Action Plan. Source: Chattanooga Design Studio

# POP-UP GREEN STREETS

MICROGIARDINI GESTITI DA ATTIVITÀ SOSTENIBILI



Pop up Green Streets, Via Porpora. Source: Quinzii Terna Architecture

# Where to start to design a Public Realm Proposal?

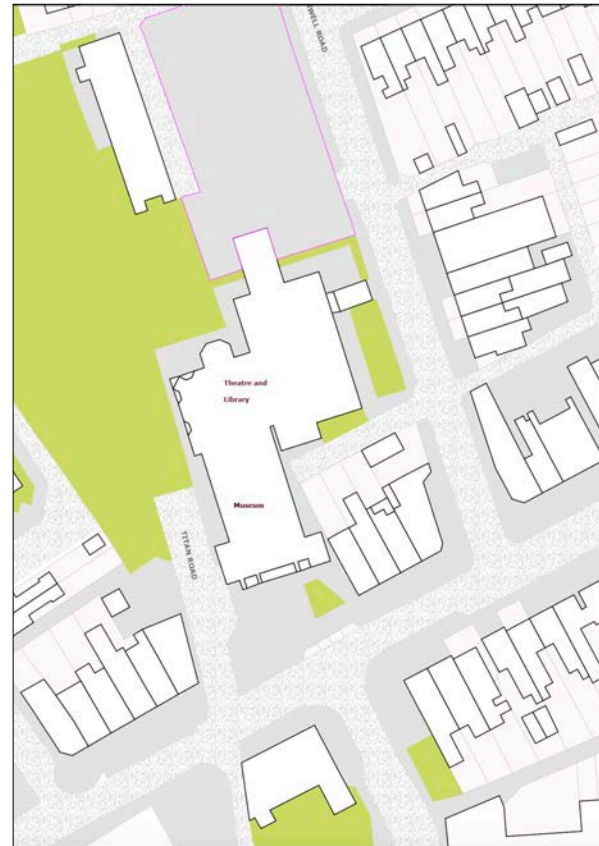
1. Digimap plan



2. Digimap plan personalised with different colours and patterns



3. Public realm proposal

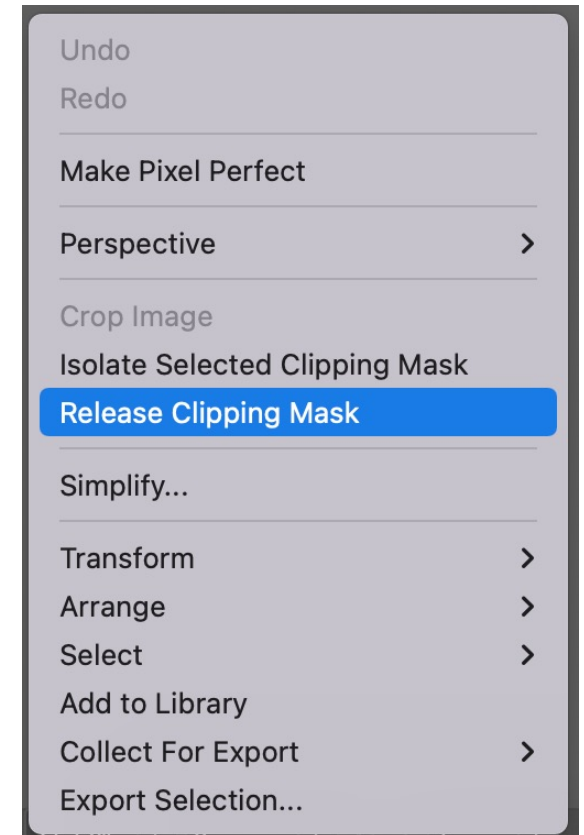




## Open a digimap map and make it editable in Illustrator by realising clipping masks

Very often a PDF image (or any kind of vector-based image) is composed of different layers and/or overlapped images. If you want to modify/erase/separate one of those layers, firstly you should unlock it by releasing any clipping mask. To do this:

Once you open a PDF image (or any kind of vector-based image) in Illustrator, you should left-click on the element you want to release (it seems that nothing is selected by this point), such as a text or a line, then right-click on it and press [‘releasing clipping mask’](#).





Once you release the first clipping mask (right-click), then you should deselect (or click on the grey background). When everything is deselected, then you should select with the cursor something on the map that has not been released. Once it is selected, then you right-click on it and again 'release clipping mask'.

If everything is released, by right-clicking you will not find anymore the tool 'release clipping mask'.

PS. you can do this only i) before modifying the image in PSD and ii) if it originally is a PDF image (or any kind of vector-based image).

A step-by-step tutorial is also available in the ***BSP Graphic Skills Portal – Adobe Illustrator handout***

PPS. sometimes you need to **'ungroup'** the image before starting realising clipping masks. To do this, right-click on the image and press 'ungroup', then click on the grey background and, when everything is deselected, start with the 'release clipping mask' process.



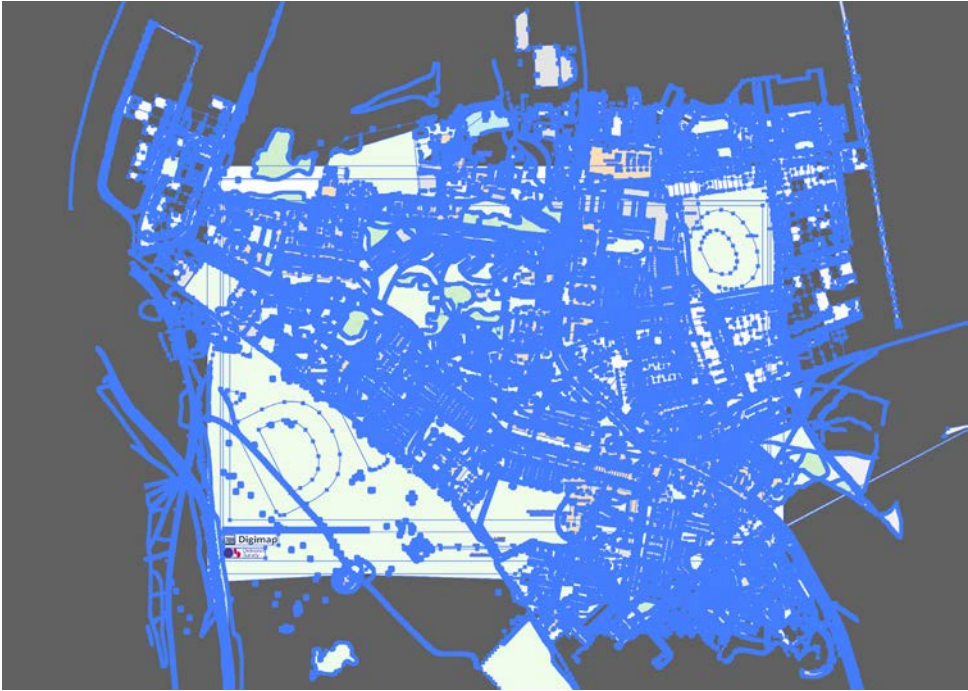
When you are in this situation, it means you still have to realise some clipping mask. You can understand this if:

- The green areas' colour (green) appears only inside the boundary of the frame – it means you should realise the gardens/parks, etc.
- The buildings' colour (orange) appears only inside the boundary of the frame – it means you should realise the building layer.
- The streets' colour (grey) appears only inside the boundary of the frame – it means you should realise the streets/plots, etc. layer.
- Etc.





When everything is realised, you will see that objects are spanned outside of the paper artboard, as well as, you will be able to select everything.







## Select similar objects

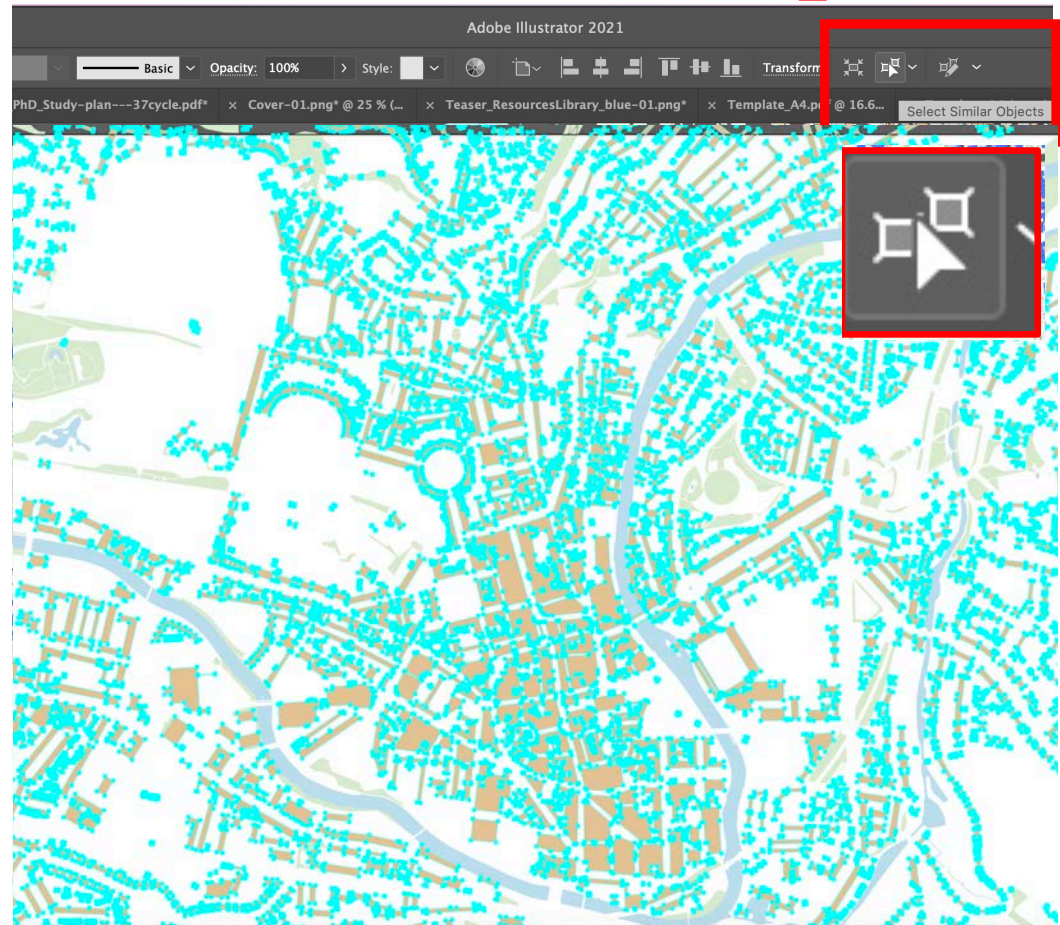
Now, you may want to separate different layers via selecting similar objects:

1. Click once on the fill colour of a building (NB. you can check that the selection is right when the fill colour is orange in the left-side bar).
2. Choose **Window > Select similar objects**, and choose a preset from the **Preset** drop-down menu.

1



2

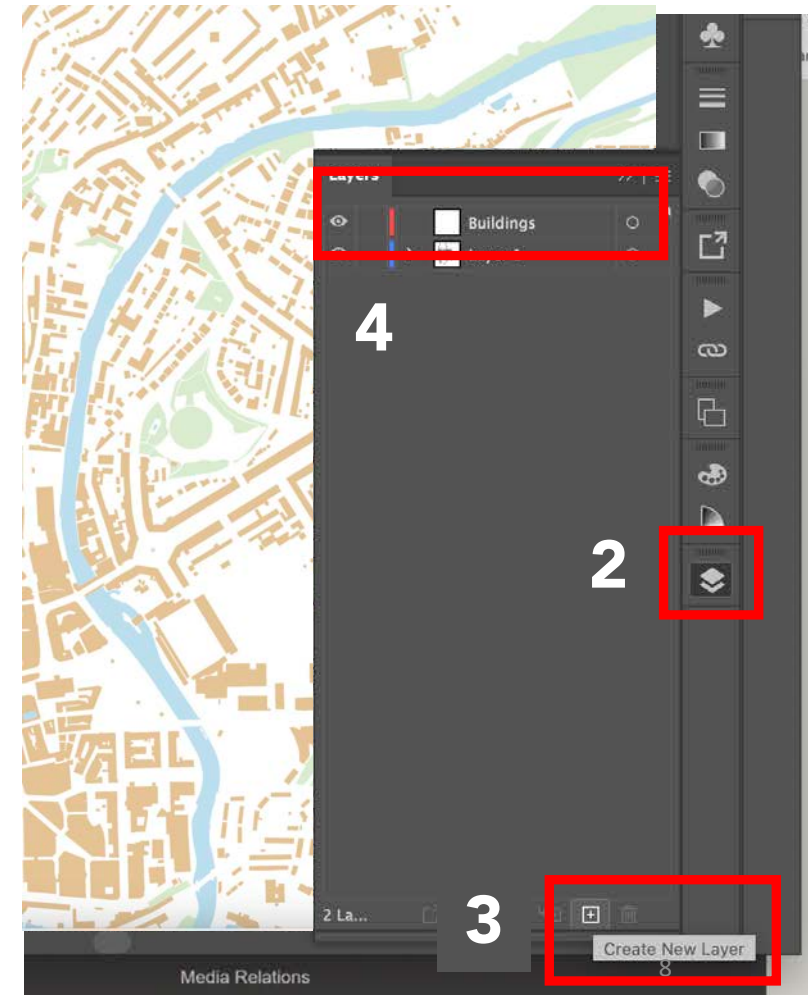




## Create a separate layer

Now, all the buildings are selected. To 'separate' them from the other objects, and move them to a different layer:

1. Edit > Cut
2. Before pasting, go on the right-sidebar > open layers
3. On the bottom, click on '+' to create a new layer
4. Rename it as 'Buildings'

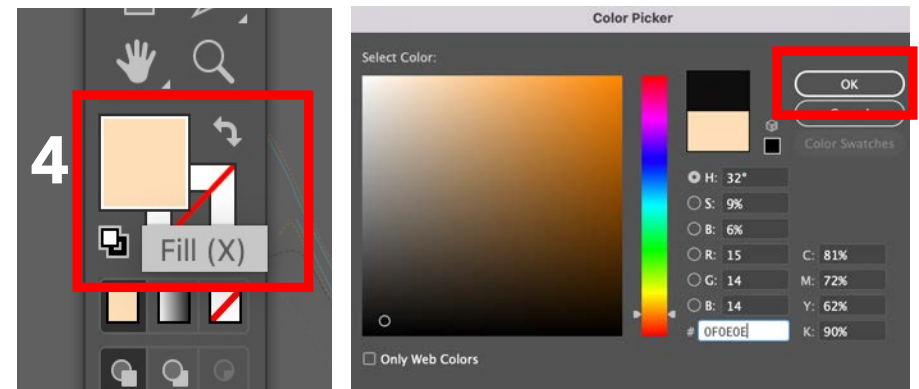
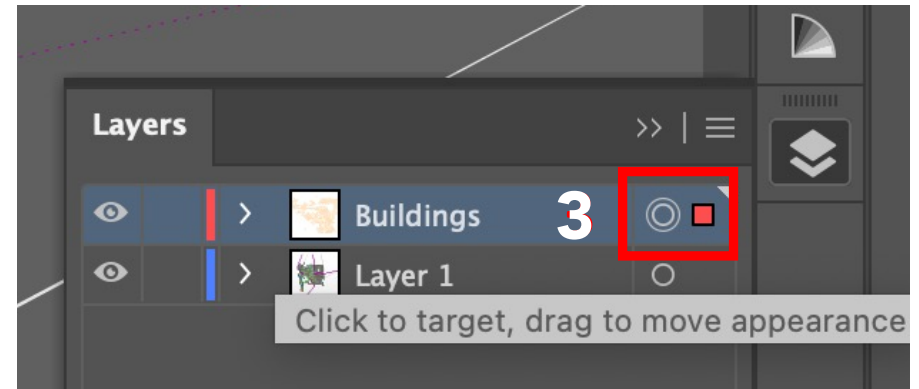




## Create a separate layer

Once you have created the layer 'Building':

1. Select the new layer created
2. Edit > paste in place
3. Now, all the buildings on your map are on a separate layer. To change colour, select all the object on that layer at once by clicking the **small dot** close to the layer's name.
4. Change colours to all the selected buildings by using the left-sidebar: double-click on the fill colour > pick the black colour > ok





## Setting the background of your map

Once you separated and organised the layers...



You can change colours and add patterns. Here are the combinations used in the image on the right:

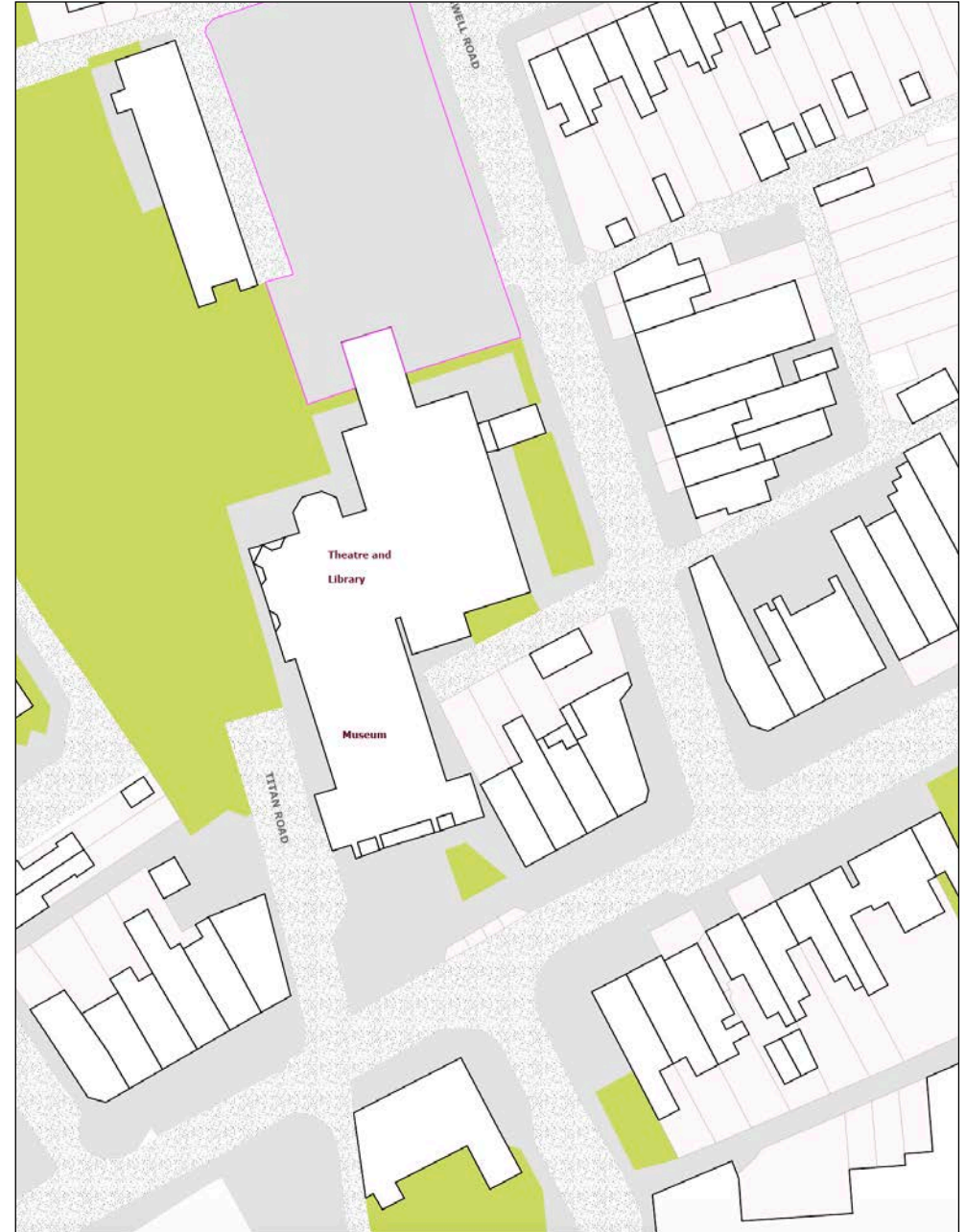
**Buildings:** Solid colour – white fill & black stroke (0.75 pt) 

**Parking:** Solid colour – light rose fill & gray stroke (0.20 pt) 

**Green areas:** Solid colour 

**Plots:** Solid colour 

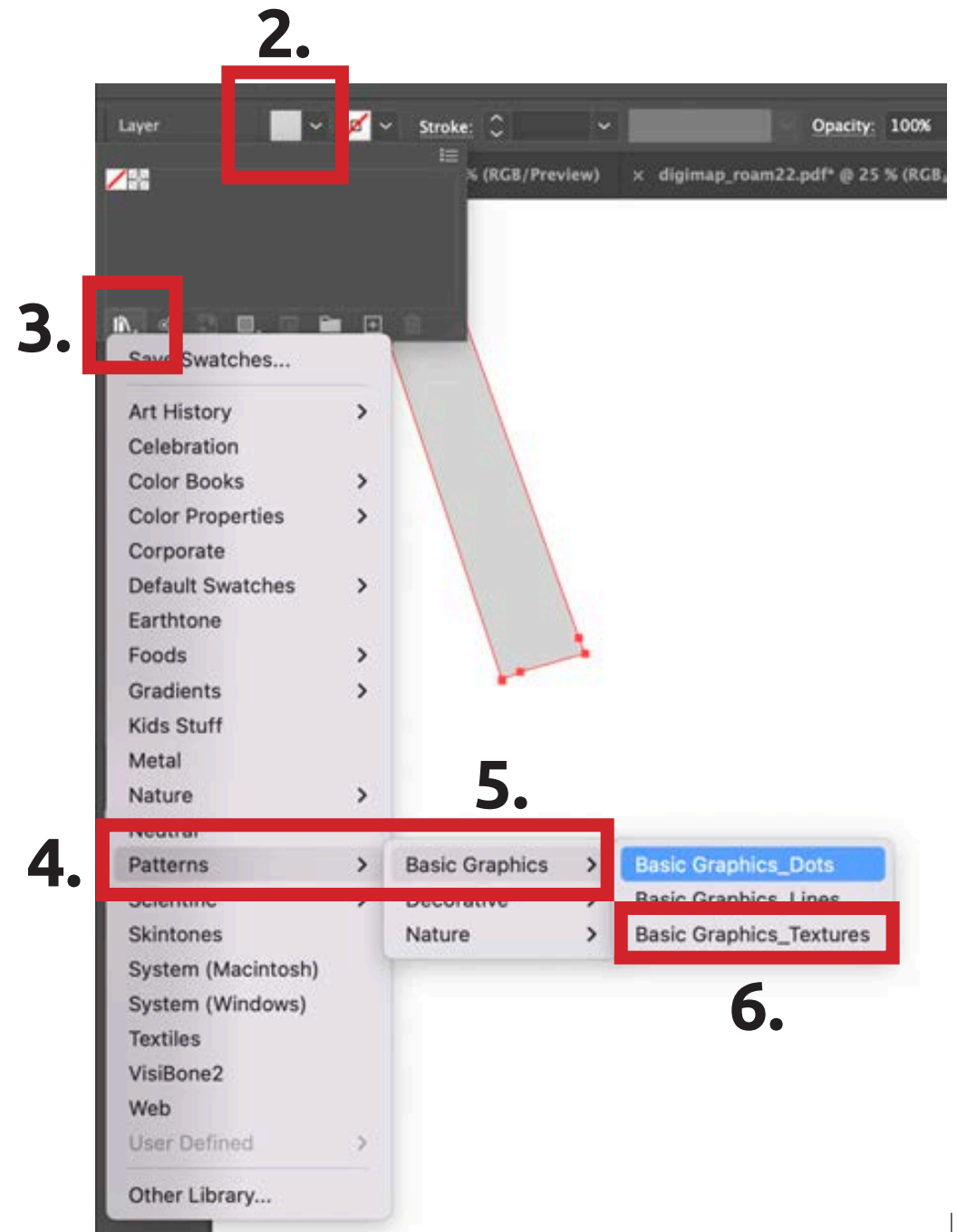
**Roads:** Dotted pattern 





## How to add pattern to a layer?

1. Select the layer you want to add the pattern
2. Open the fill colour drop down menu
3. Open the Swatch Library menu
4. Patterns
5. Basic Graphics
6. Basic Graphics\_Textures





1. Choose the Texture most appropriate for the layer.

**Note.** you can adjust the scale and direction of the texture by:

2. Select and right-click on the layer with the texture

3. **Transform > Scale**

4. Deselect '*Transform Objects*' and adjust the scale

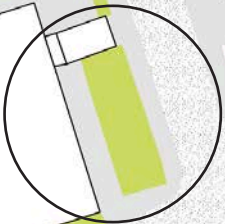




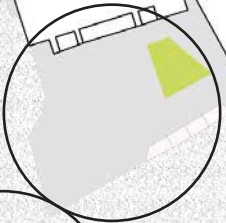
## Let's start design the public realm

To design the public realm on the plan, the best thing is to identify some areas that you may want to develop.

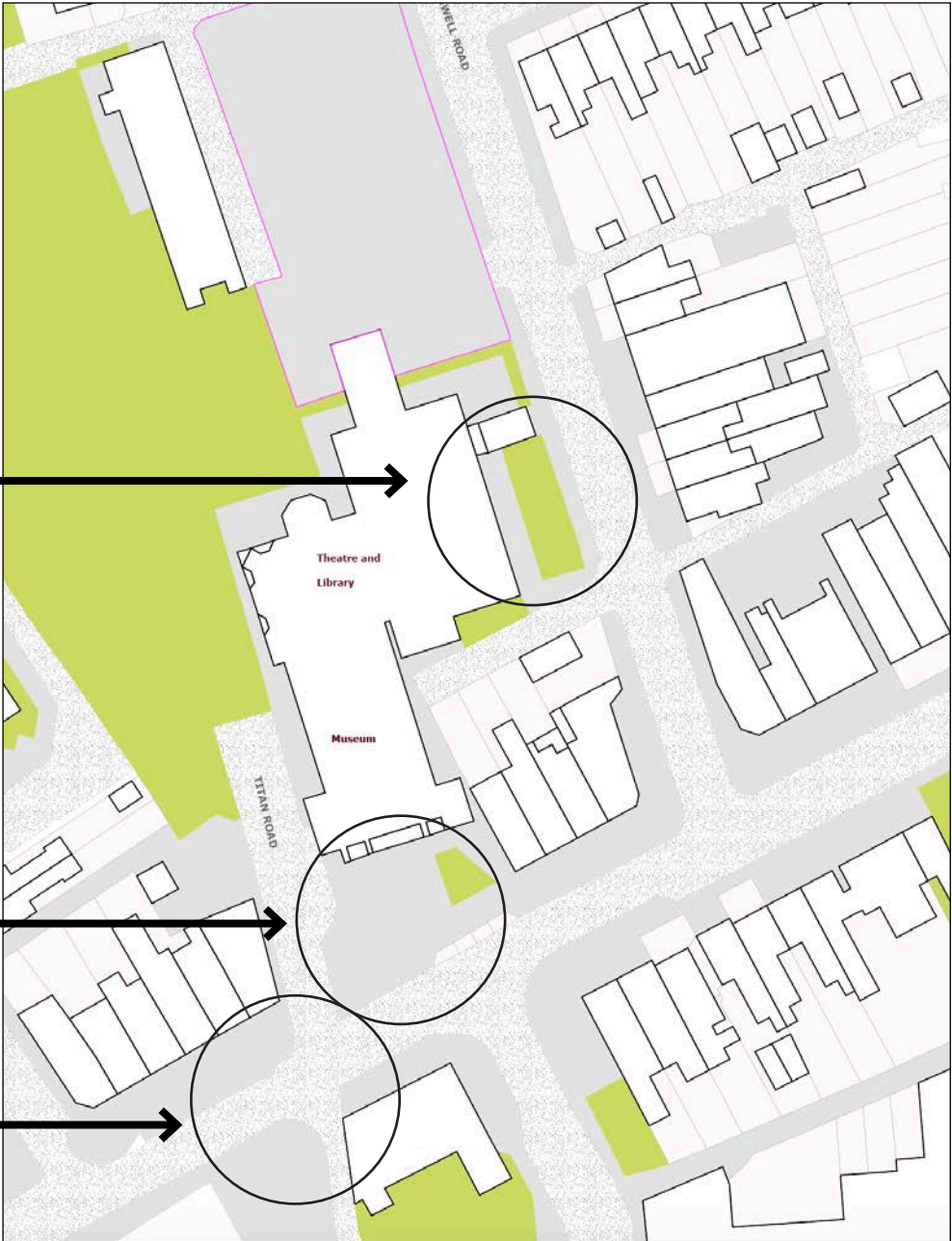
URBAN PLAYGROUND



PUBLIC SQUARE



MID-BLOCK CROSSWALK AND GREENERY





## Setting the background of your map

Then, it is always useful to identify some elements or groups of elements which are part of your strategy. For instance,

Add greenery

Add street crossing

Add public areas

Add street protections

Add urban furniture

etc.



<https://www.chattanoogaastudio.com/publicrealmactionplan>



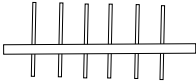




## Start working on each site

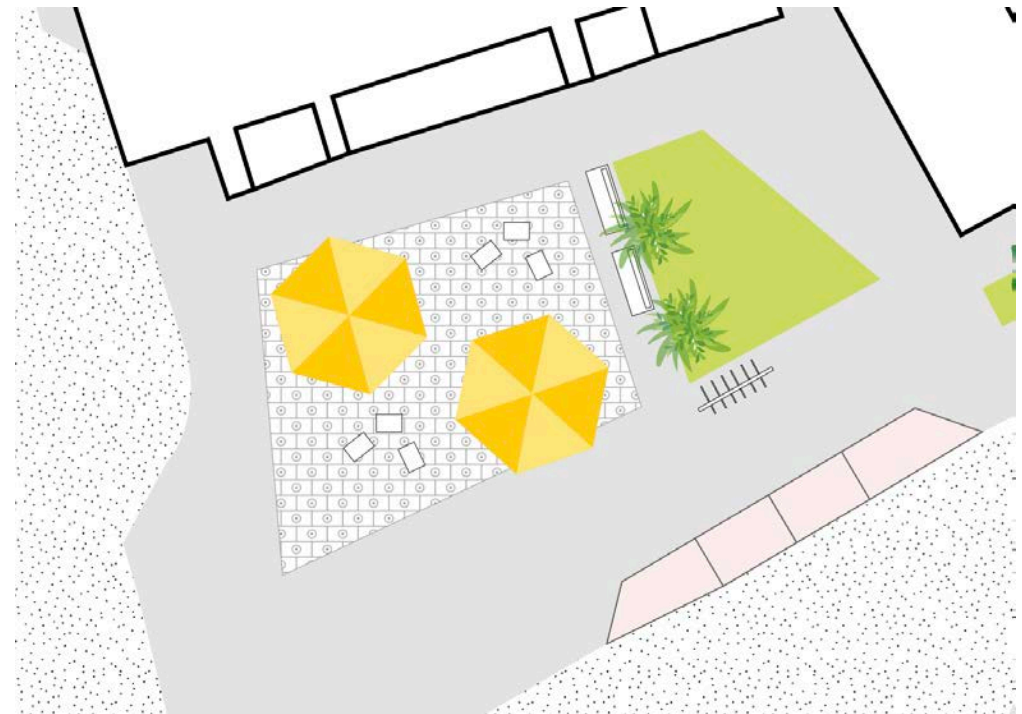
Once the background image is set, it is possible to start designing the public realm for each site.

In SITE 1 you can create:

- Simple banches and sittings 
- Some gazebos - *you can do this by creating a hexagon and play with colour tones* 
- Simple bicycle rack - *you can do this using multiple rectangular shapes* 
- Parking spaces
- Different tree typologies - *Adobe Stock has multiple options:*  
<https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=tree+plan>



## PUBLIC SQUARE



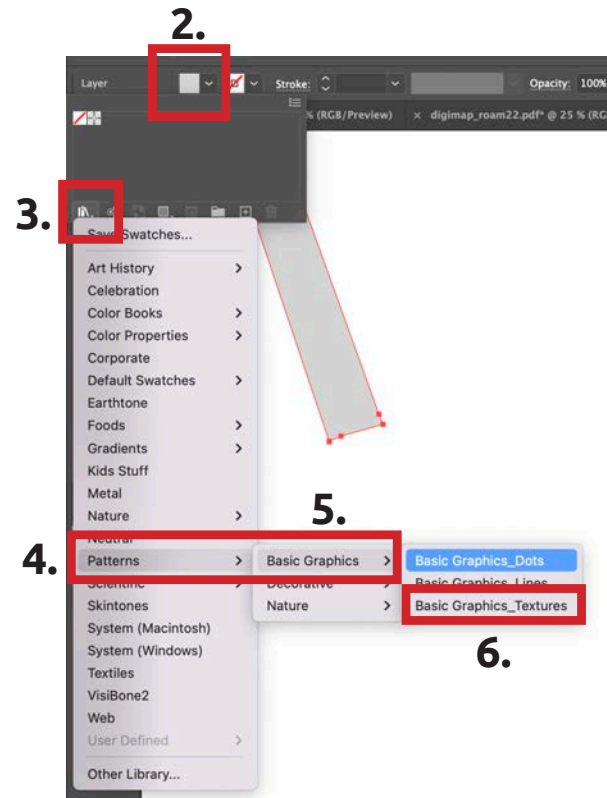
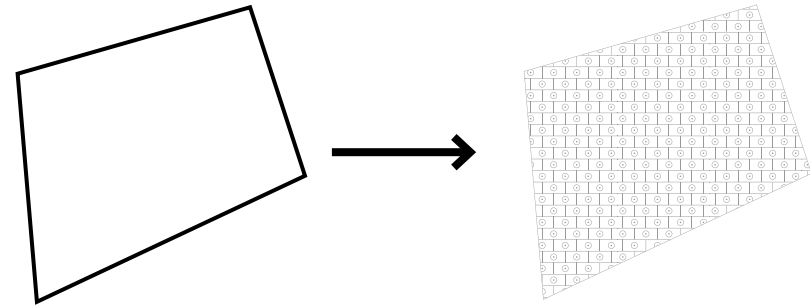


## Start working on each site

Moreover, identifying different pavement patterns is useful to define different urban spaces. For squares for example, you can use the **Pen tool** to define the area using a white fill and a transparent stroke.

Then, this layer should be duplicate by **Edit > Copy**, **Edit > Paste in Place**. On the duplicate on top, let's add a texture by

1. Select the layer you want to add the pattern
2. Open the fill colour drop down menu
3. Open the Swatch Library menu
4. Patterns
5. Basic Graphics
6. Basic Graphics\_Textures

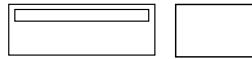




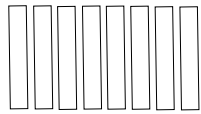
## Start working on each site

In SITE 2 you can create:

- Simple banches and sittings



- **Zebra crossing** - you can do this using multiple rectangular shapes with white fill and black stroke.



- Different tree typologies -

Adobe Stock has multiple options:

<https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=tree+plan>

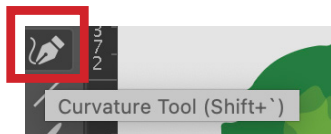
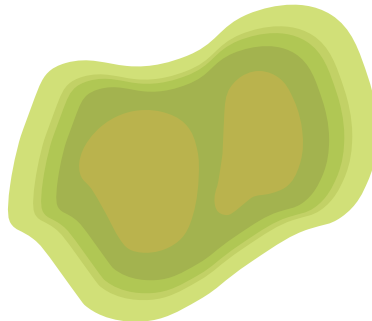
**NOTE.** you can add transparency to some of those trees.



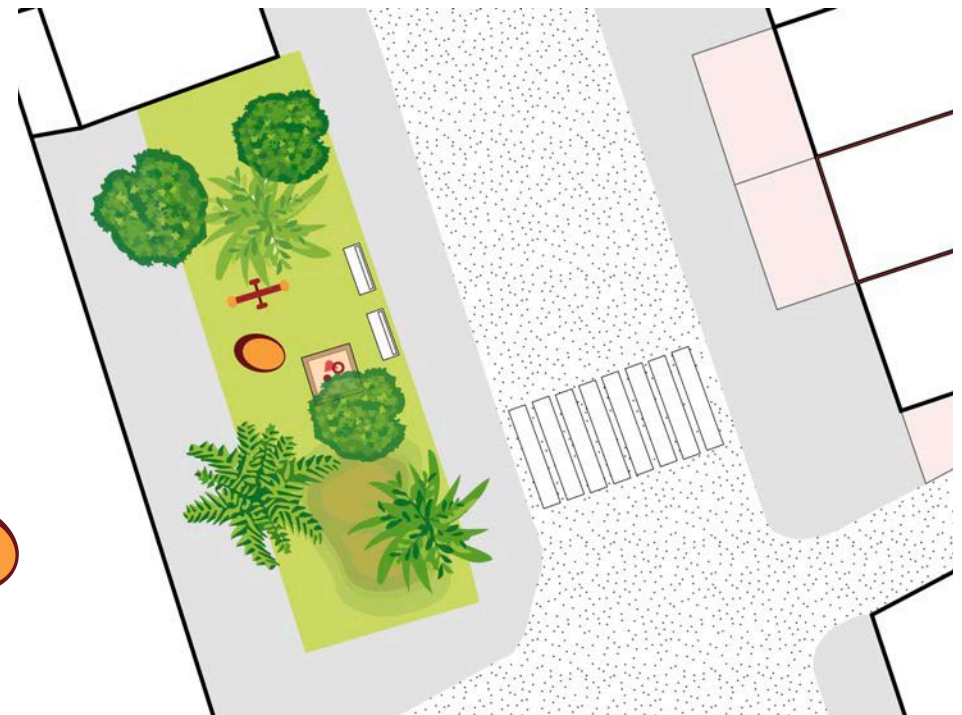
- Some **plays for kids.** Those can be designed by downloading some ready-made and available online or using some shapes and colours.



- Some **hillocks** / terrain movements to simulate level changes. Those can be designed using the Curvature Tool and adding different colours.



## URBAN PLAYGROUND

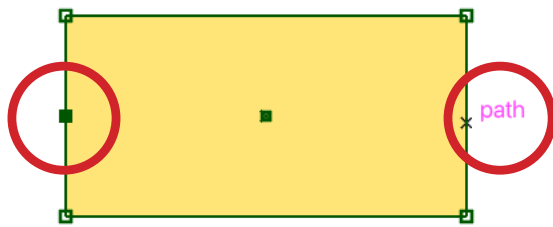
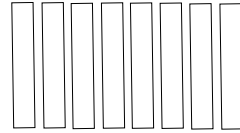




## Start working on each site

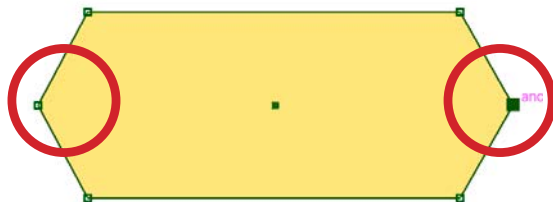
In SITE 3 you can add:

- **Zebra crossing** - you can do this using multiple rectangular shapes with white fill and black stroke - with a mid-block crosswalk created using a rectangular shape (yellow fill and black stroke).



Using the **Pen Tool**, add two new points in the midpoint of the short length of the rectangle.

Use the Direct select Tool (white arrow) > click in one of those points > move outside



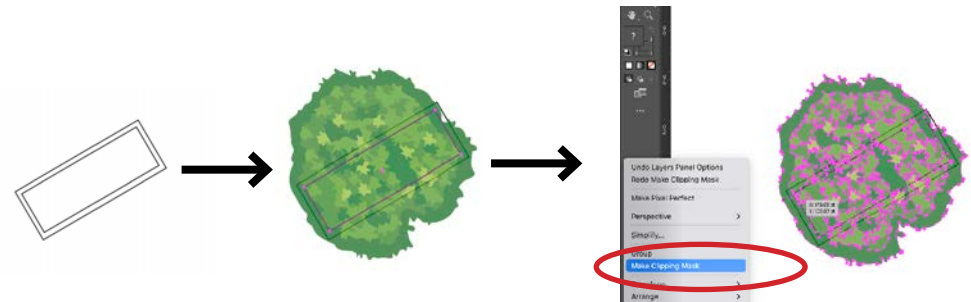
## MID-BLOCK CROSSWALK AND GREENERY





## Start working on each site

- To the crosswalk you can also add some other elements, such as **light poles or traffic lights** for crossing
- New green areas
- Different **tree** typologies - *Adobe Stock has multiple options:*  
<https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=tree+plan>  
*NOTE. you can add transparency to some of those trees.*
- Some **flowerpots** to protect pedestrians from vehicles. To design those you can:
  1. Create a rectangle
  2. Create a smaller rectangle inside
  3. Copy a tree in-between the two rectangles
  4. Select the small rectangle (on top) and the tree (below) > right-click > Make clipping mask

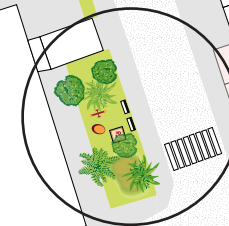




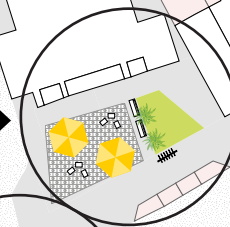
## Let's start design the public realm

Now the public realm is developed for three sites. Those can be increased with greenery, curb extensions, wayfindings etc.

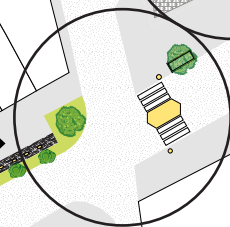
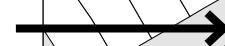
URBAN PLAYGROUND



PUBLIC SQUARE



MID-BLOCK CROSSWALK AND GREENERY





# Let's start design the public realm

As explained at the beginning, the map is often accompanied by some bird's eye zooms for the most developed sites. You can create those by using some exemplar images.



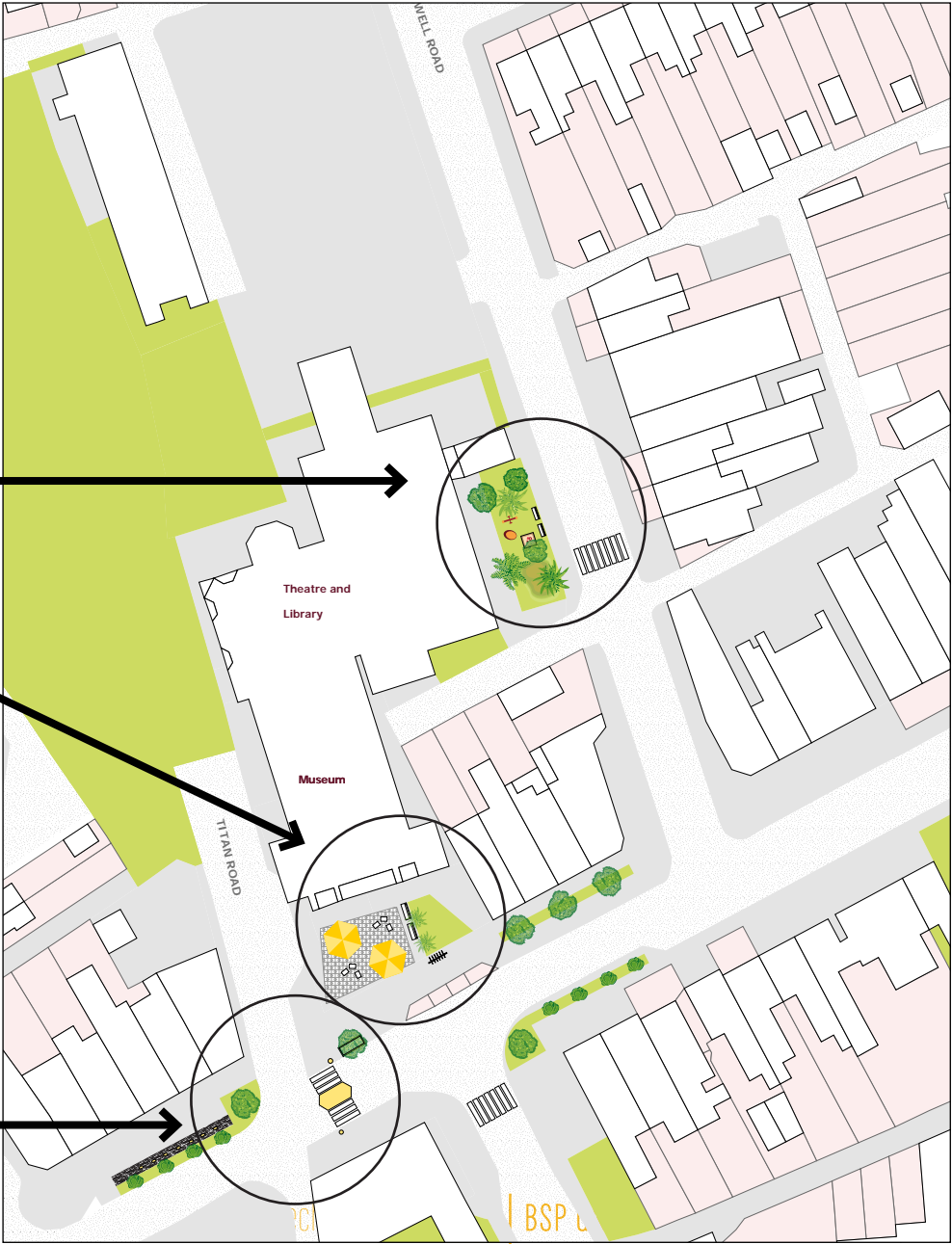
URBAN PLAYGROUND



PUBLIC SQUARE



MID-BLOCK CROSSWALK AND GREENERY





## Combine a public realm plan with 3D

Instead of using exemplar images, you can also create some '3D pieces' of your plan by using SketchUp for Web.



SketchUp is a modelling software to create 3D graphics that can be used for creating a 3D model, sections or aerial views.

### In SketchUp, you can:

- Create 3D models of buildings, furniture, interiors, landscapes, and more.
- Customize the SketchUp interface to reflect the way you work.
- Share 3D models as walk through animations, scenes, or printouts, with realistic light and shadows. You can even print a model on a 3D printer.
- Import files from other 3D modelling programs or tools, or export your SketchUp file for use with other popular modelling and image-editing software.

### Key skills:

- Making 3D objects
- Adding textures and shadows
- 3D Warehouse
- Setting scenes and styles
- Parallel vs. Perspective views

## Downloading:

1. Using the **FREE version SketchUp for Web** (<https://www.sketchup.com/products/sketchup-for-web>).

In this case, you do not have to download anything, but your project will stay online: The first time you use SketchUp, you need to sign in to activate your free version. After you're signed in, just click on "**start modelling**". This dialogue box is your starting point for creating a model and appears every time you start SketchUp (unless you choose to turn it off in the SketchUp Preferences dialogue box).

### HAVE A LOOK TO THE RELATED PORTAL HANDOUTS:

**SOFTWARE GUIDE:** [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/sites/bartlett\\_planning/files/sketchup.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/sites/bartlett_planning/files/sketchup.pdf)

### TECHNIQUES:

- [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/sites/bartlett\\_planning/files/3.1\\_techniques\\_handouts\\_sketchup\\_to\\_photoshop-perspective.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/sites/bartlett_planning/files/3.1_techniques_handouts_sketchup_to_photoshop-perspective.pdf)
- <https://mediacentral.ucl.ac.uk/Player/IIE7JFa2>



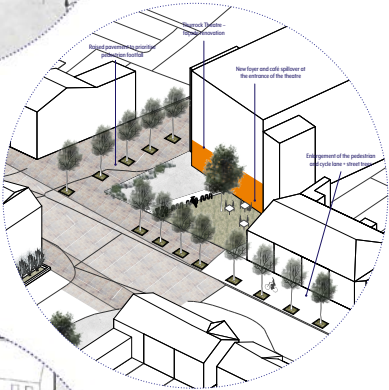


# Combine a public realm plan with 3D

This is an example on how you can turn the previous exemplar images into proper 3D views.



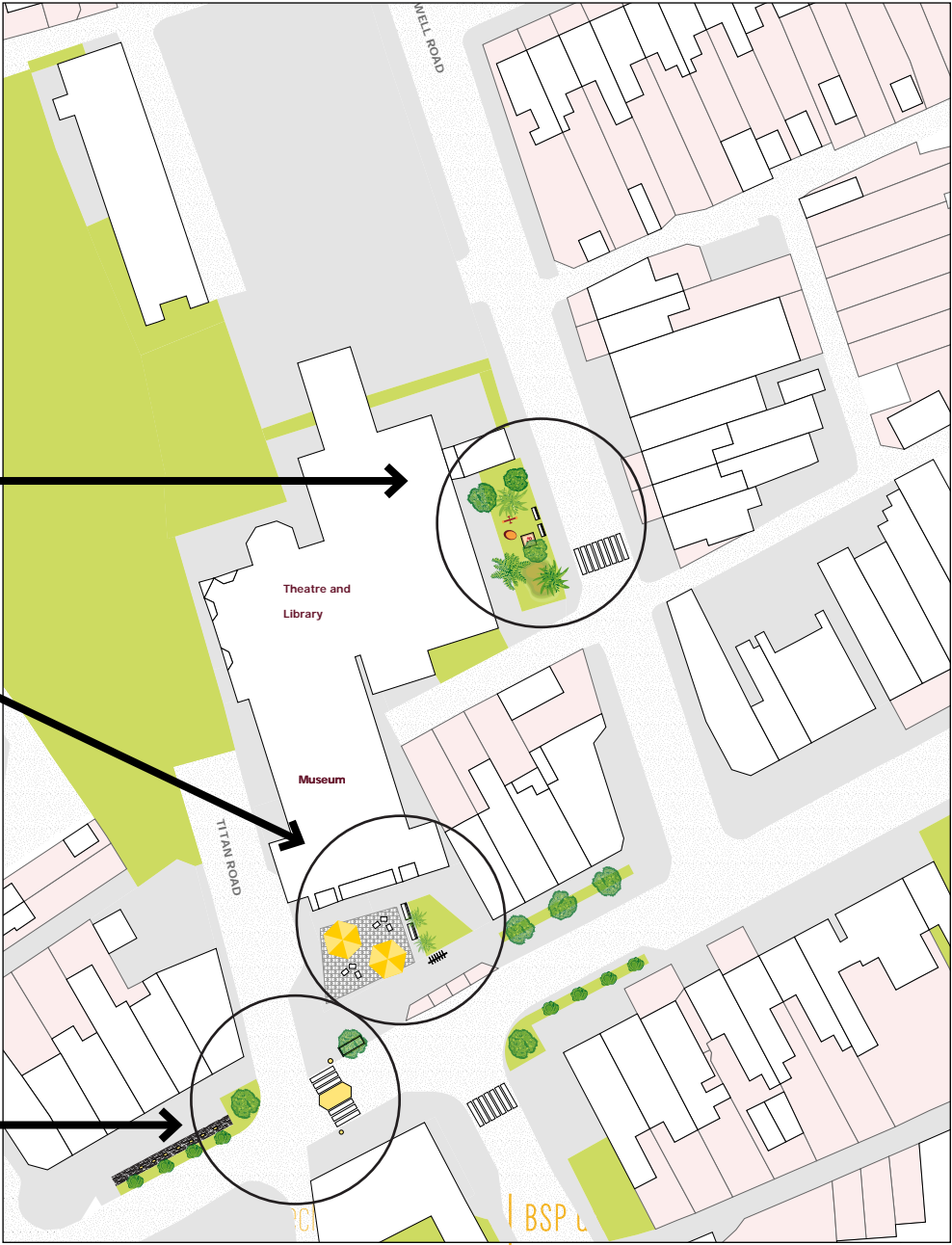
URBAN PLAYGROUND



PUBLIC SQUARE



MID-BLOCK CROSSWALK AND GREENERY





**THE BARTLETT**