

Research Method: Personas

Personas are used to capture common behaviors and easily allow the designer to clearly picture who they are designing for, this is key in user centered design. Personas include a name, a short description, stock photo, a short narrative, and his/her goals.

Persona 1: Jacob

Jacob, who is about 5 years old, lives in Stuyvesant Town with his older sister and parents. Most days after school Jacob is allowed to play at the Union Square playground for 20-30 minutes. After that period of time his mom will yell for him and they continue home. Some weekends Jacob will come back to the playground with his older sister or dad. He likes it better when his dad watches him because then he has someone to push him on the swings. Jacob wishes he had more time to play at the playground and that there were always swings available.



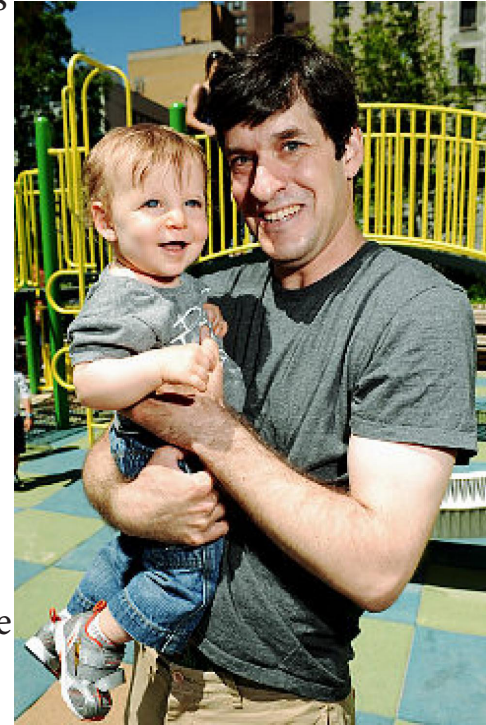
Persona 2: Nancy

Nancy, who is about 30-40 years old, has been a nanny for 10 years. She watches three year old Sophia, whose parents both work during the week. Sophia lives in an apartment building walking distance from Union Square. Nancy frequents this playground since it is close by and there are surrounding stores incase she needs to run errands for her employer. Nancy usually rests on the benches as she watches Sophia and their expensive stroller she parked just inside the gate. Nancy briefly says hello to some other guardians and then tends to Sophia who is starting to cry. Nancy wishes the benches were more comfortable and the playground was open rain, shine, or snow. She also hopes that Sophia is always safe at the playground.



Persona 3: Don

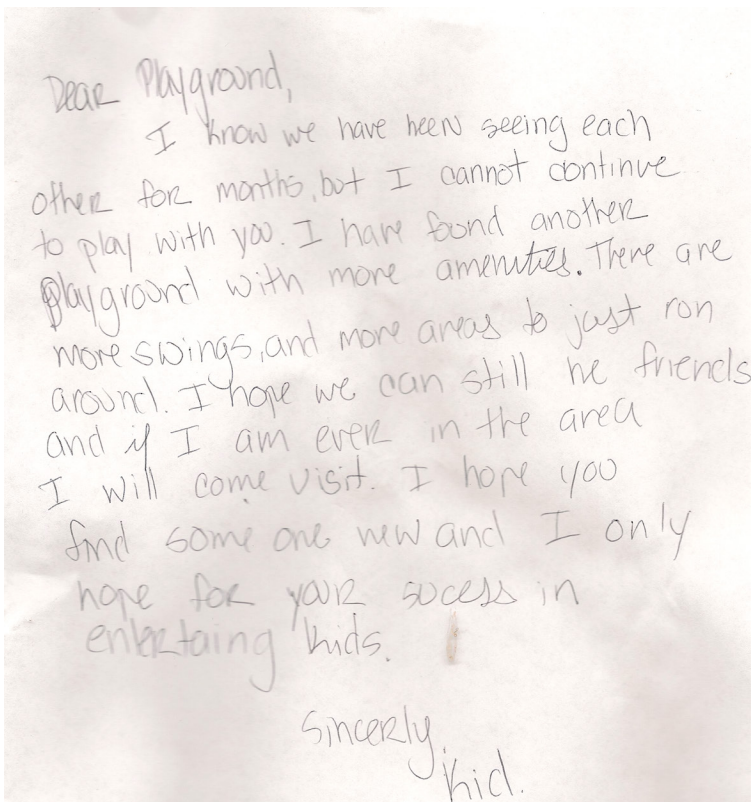
Don is a dad of two, who lives just North of Union Square with his wife and kids. Most Saturday mornings Don can be found at the Union Square playground with his eldest son, Sam. Sam is 2 years old and enjoys this alone time with his father, as his newborn baby brother is at home with their mom. Don enjoys getting out of the house, but doesn't really enjoy the playground. He is usually texting his buddies or checking his work email, instead of paying attention to Sam who just made a huge snowball with the leftover snow. After being pelted with the snowball, Don starts to more actively pay attention to his son. He's not one of the dads that lets all the kids chase him but he will participate in some leisurely tag with Sam. After some jogging and hopping Don is ready to leave. Sam still wants to play so he allows five more minutes. Don doesn't necessarily hate nor love the playground. He wishes there was some other bonding activity he could do with his son instead of the playground so frequently.



The personas were created from frequent users of the union square playground. They each come to the space for a different reason, yet all use the same equipment. These three personas will be impactive in designing an alteration for the park, as each of their needs and wants should be considered.

Research Method: The Love Letter and the Breakup Letter

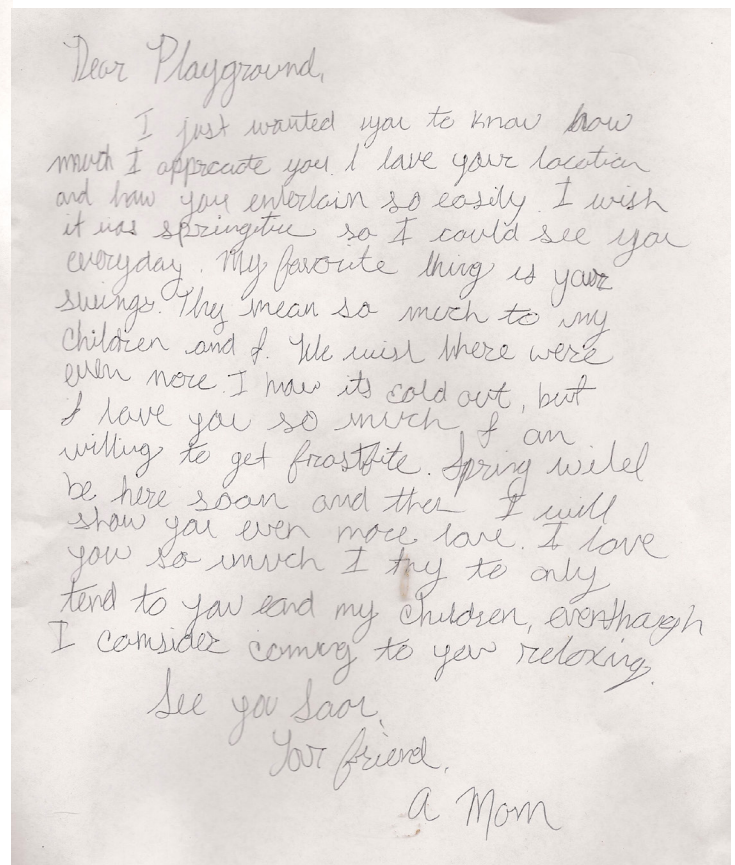
This method involves a quick letter writing to a product to define and reveal how people feel about what they are using. In this method one is personifying an object/product by addressing the letter to that product. The love letter focuses on the positives and infatuations, whereas the break up letter informs about why they could leave this product and or use something else.



Dear Playground,

I know we have been seeing each other for months, but I cannot continue to play with you. I have found another playground with more amenities. There are more swings, and more areas to just run around. I hope we can still be friends and if I am ever in the area I will come visit. I hope you find some one new and I only hope for your success in entertaining kids.

Sincerely,
Kid.



Dear Playground,

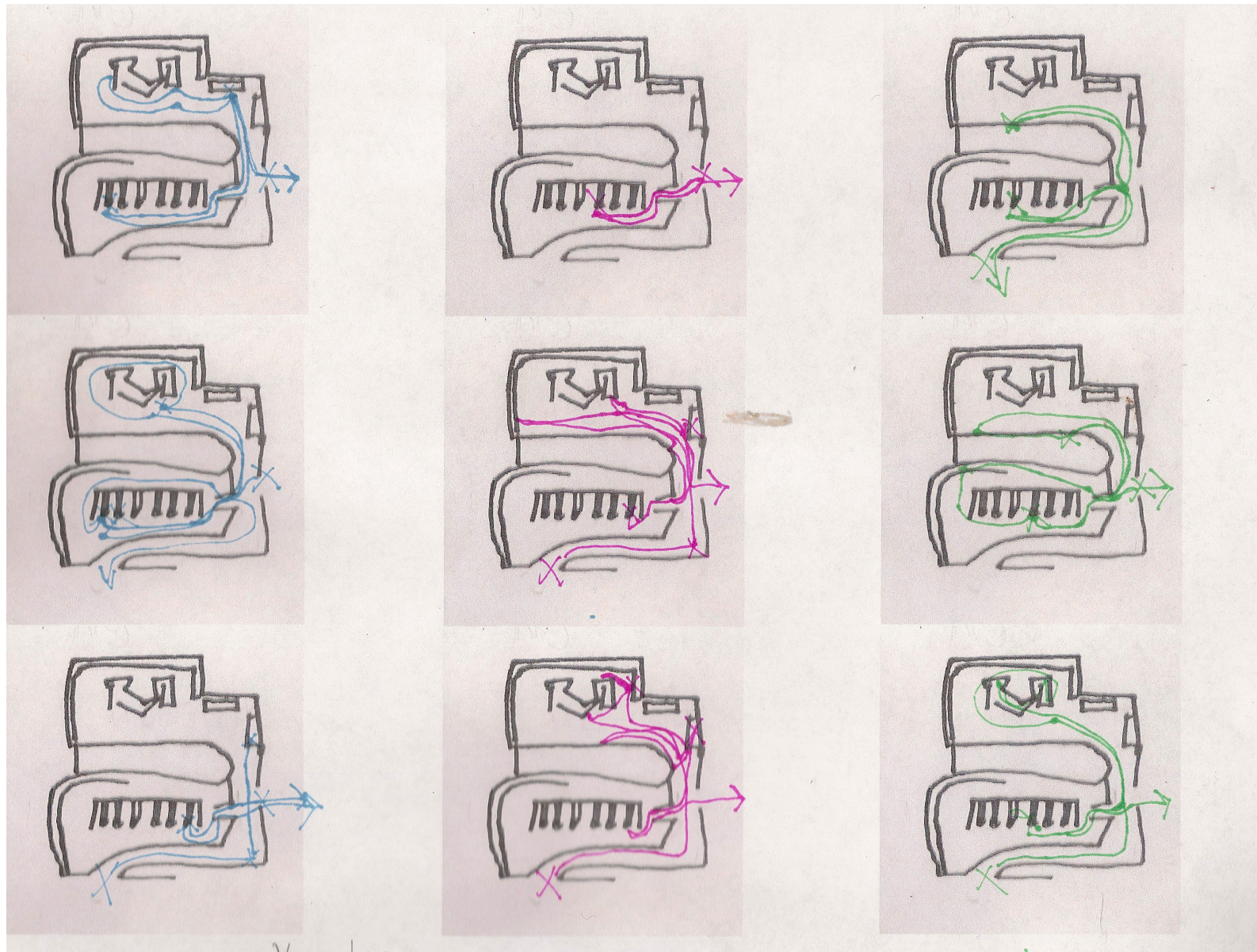
I just wanted you to know how much I appreciate you. I love your location and how you entertain so easily. I wish it was springtime so I could see you everyday. My favorite thing is your swings. They mean so much to my children and I. We wish there were even more. I know its cold out, but I love you so much I am willing to get frostbite. Spring will be here soon and then I will show you even more love. I love you so much I try to only tend to you and my children, even though I consider coming to you relaxing.

See you soon,
Your friend,
A Mom

These letters are written from a hypothetical kid and mom who use the playground. The mom explains her excitement for springtime, as being outside will be more enjoyable. These letters were created from observations, and brief interviews.

Research Method: Behavioral Mapping

Behavioral Mapping is used to document human activity in a set location. One can use video, photos, plans, or an annotated map as I did below. It is to show where people are going within a space. There is place-centered and individual-centered mapping, these methods can be used simultaneously.



The blue marker documents a male adult, the pink a female adult, and the green a child. The X marks the gate in which the human entered and the arrow is where they exited the playground. This method shows that the tot lot is barely used. Only one child actually climbed on it, all other subjects just walked around it.

Alteration Proposal

After researching and observing the site I am proposing to install a new set of swings. This set would only include four swings, due to the limited space available. This swing stand would go in the sandbox area, which divides the tot lot and current swings. The sand box has no use during the winter months, so the addition of swings would allow as much use to the space throughout the entire year, as the swings are very popular during cold months. The swings set currently has five full bucket baby swings, and one high back baby swing. In order to keep this area designated for toddlers and babies the swing set will not have the classic belt swing seats, but rather an assortment. This assortment will include:



A drawing of the new swingset in the space:

