

Neighborhood Design with Youth and Community”

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Equity: Inclusive Urban Landscapes

RESILIENT CITY: Physical, Social, and Economic Perspectives

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Minneapolis, known for its wide disparities, includes the North neighborhood with inequities in youth incarceration, income, education, health, home ownership, homelessness, and 80% BIPOC citizenry. Northside residents seek changes that reduce poverty and neighborhood isolation. The design studio goal is to co-create with youth and residents a design that employs public realm investment to reconnect the neighborhood to the city while providing housing (and financing) that serves all incomes and enables wealth-building, and human services that address youth needs.

The project research team is comprised of the executive director of a neighborhood organization, a community advocate and owner of an architectural firm, a developer and from the university, a researcher and a design professor of architecture, both experienced in urban participatory design. An advisory group of experts informs the community design with research.

Presently, streets and highways block access to three potential neighborhood assets, downtown, the Mississippi River, and a city park. The three-year project begins with the design of neighborhood reconnection including housing and social services as its first topic. Geodesign, a GIS-based approach to participation that takes place in community meetings, employs material provided by the university students and the neighborhood youth.

Summer recruitment and orientation of youth and adult community participants, is followed by fall semester once-a week meetings with university students and youth to prepare the community meeting materials (ten layers of maps, ten or more design options for each layer). In the Geodesign process, community teams representing different interests work independently to create four design alternatives, and negotiate a final scheme.

The paper describes the engagement process and the final designs, answering such questions as: How did recruitment and retention work? What was learned from employing the Geodesign process? How did the youth and university students work together? What challenges were faced in community meetings?