# Feeling the Future

Participatory Design, Futurism, and Equity-Centered Community Development

Molly G. Martin, August 2021

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# New America

New America is a nonpartisan, nonprofit "think and action tank:" a **civic platform** that connects a research institute, technology lab, solutions network, media hub and public forum.

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# New America Local

New America Local is committed to creating a feedback loop **from lived experience to public policy**, focusing on economic equity.

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# Today

We'll take your legacy of community-led and community-centered action and play with our "crystal ball." Looking at future scenarios and futurism as tools to ensure development is equity-minded.

# "Economic equity?"

- **Prioritizing the most vulnerable**

- **Acknowledging systemic racism**

- **Saying what we mean**

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# "Economic equity?"
## Prioritizing the most vulnerable
## (Dr. Kim Crayton)

Who is going to miss out on or be denied social and economic mobility because of who they are?

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# "Economic equity?"

## Acknowledging systemic racism

This helps us get detailed, differentiated, and actionable.

# "Economic equity?"
## Saying what we mean

Name and notice people and populations as you design programs, as specifically as you are able.

*"If you mean you're focusing on Black people, say 'Black people.'"*

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You aren't designing "against" a group when you design with another group's experiences in mind.

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# What does "economic equity" mean for you?

IN THE CHAT:

"Equity in [my service area] would mean that

_____."

# Detroit: A Tale of…Lots of Cities

When a city is as racially, ethnically, economically, and culturally diverse as Detroit, it can be tempting to think the concept of equity is already omnipresent.

# What is my neighbor's world like today?

Detroit-Warren-Dearborn today:

- 4.32M (670K in Detroit)
- Poverty 14.5% (35%)
- Med. Household $63K (33%)
- Med. Property $192K ($59K)
- Med. Age 40 (35)
- Employed 48% (39%)

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# What is my neighbor's world like today?

- Population shrinkage story hard to shake
- Recent growth from foreign-born population
- Median income in Detroit = 50% lower than U.S.
- Median property value = 80% lower than U.S.
- Younger
- Black cultural center

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# What is my neighbor's world like today?

- Lower median income than peers including Birmingham, Memphis, New Orleans, Baltimore
- Most "unequal housing market"
- State population growth from Latinx, Asian not translating to all cities

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# What is my neighbor's world like today?

Michigan once led the U.S. in earnings for Black men and women.

It now leads the U.S. in wage decline for Black men and women.

(Ballard, MSU)

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# What impacts our economic lives?

- Racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, ableism...
- Labor market/economy shifts
- Education
- Generational wealth
- Social networks
- Property ownership
- Childcare
- Transit access/transportation
- Food security
- Disability accommodation
- Cash
- Climate

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# So what keeps people from moving up?

IN THE CHAT:

"The number one barrier to Molly being stable is _____."

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# So what keeps people from moving up?

IN THE CHAT:

"The number one barrier to Molly being happy and thriving is _____."

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# Why race & gender gaps matter

**Whomever is left out today, will be left out tomorrow if we don't design systems to address inequities.** In addition to the moral reasons for allowing everyone to participate in the economy, there are economic ones. The region is facing a talent shortfall and leaving talent on the table won't fix that.

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# Why wages matter

In the future, a worker's number one asset is going to be flexibility and adaptability.

Adaptability is a skill well-honed by people with modest means.

Flexibility is often a privilege of "haves."

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# Why wages matter

Adaptability is a skill well-honed by people with modest means. Flexibility is often a privilege of "haves."

"Take a class!"
"Go back to school!"
"Get certified!"
"Plenty of jobs in the next town over!"
"You can work from anywhere now."

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# Change is expensive

**TRANSIT/TRANSPORTATION/MAINTENANCE**
**$$$$**
**CHILDCARE**
**$$$$**
**INSURANCE**
**$$$$**
**INTERNET ACCESS/TECH**
**$$$$**
**DRESS CODES**

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# Why immigration matters

**The Great Lakes region *has* only been able to grow or remain stable in thanks to our foreign-born neighbors.**

Immigrants account for half of the regional population growth from 2000-15.

51% of the region's American-born population were working age in 2015 vs. 70% of foreign-born residents.

We know that economies that are welcoming to immigrants are doing better economically. Healthcare, entrepreneurial ventures, manufacturing...all have been boosted by immigrants.

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# Design Lab: A year in the life...

# Human-Centered Design

Generally speaking, human-centered design spans three phases: **inspiration, ideation, and implementation**.

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# First, though, what's the problem?

- What is the problem of practice?
- What resources and assets does the community have/can it build on?
- What challenges do you foresee?
- What more do you need to know?

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# Human-Centered Design: Ideation

- Get smart on trends
- Do it with your community
- Enlist experts on trauma and healing
- "Bring a chair"
- Empower blue sky
- Responsibly rain on parades
- Begin with reality and layer on possible change

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# Human-Centered Design: Ideation

| WORST CASE | LIKELY | MOONSHOT |
|---|---|---|
| Personal/Interpersonal | Personal/Interpersonal | Personal/Interpersonal |
| Local Community (Institutional, Cultural, Physical, Economic) | Local Community (Institutional, Cultural, Physical, Economic) | Local Community (Institutional, Cultural, Physical, Economic) |
| World (Institutional, Cultural, Physical, Economic) | World (Institutional, Cultural, Physical, Economic) | World (Institutional, Cultural, Physical, Economic) |

# Human-Centered Design: Solution Development and Implementation

- What design criteria emerged as important? (Measurable? Employee-Centered? Solving Barriers for Specific Groups?)
- How would these things change a neighbor's life?
- How would it impact neighbors if it failed?
- What will you need to do within 3 months? 6? 9?

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# Human-Centered Design: Solution Development and Implementation

- Ask a better question ("What if we...")
- Think about times you wish someone had listened to you -- what were you trying to say?
- "How will they find it, use it, improve it?"
- Make a hotlist of considerations re: barriers for the most vulnerable

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# User-Centered Policy: Self Assessment

- Who are the **people** affected, by what issues, and how are people involved in designing the solution?

- What does **success** look like?

- What **tools** are available?

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