

# DESIGN for EQUITY

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Construction

# 7. Synopsis

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# Synthesis

The research investigates the impact of ‘equity’ on the City’s civic infrastructure with special focus on libraries, police precincts and urban plazas. Although the main quest is to define EQUITY in the built environment, it was necessary to understand all aspects of the term; namely the human component and the built form. We therefore studied interpretations of equity in the social environment as well as in planning and architecture culminating in our expansive literature review.

We also brought together an interdisciplinary Advisory Committee composed of planners, social scientists, community activists and leaders. After two long sessions discussing their firsthand experiences, we asked them how they understood ‘EQUITY.’ Although topics of sustainability and accessibility came up, the more heated discussions involved community participation when designing a civic facility, both as a process and the product.

## Process and Product

While the ‘product’ is always relative to the scope of work or the type of facility and the community for which it is planned, the ‘process’ may provide principles that are applicable to the planning and building of future civic infrastructure. The previous chapters include a number of documentations and analyses of various ‘products.’ We will be discussing the concept of ‘process’ further.

## Demographic analysis

We began our research by analyzing six existing facilities in two of New York’s communities to understand the relationship between civic infrastructure and their communities. Our activities were manifold. We simultaneously looked into specific facility types that became central to our study and the communities

they were serving. For our data collection on Hunts Point in the South Bronx and Bushwick in Brooklyn, we considered several open data tools but chose the [www.oasisnyc.net/](http://www.oasisnyc.net/) as the primary source of information.

## Accessibility/Timeline

We developed maps to trace accessibility in terms of physical distance and time based on the assumption that it takes 20 minutes to walk a mile.

## Diversity/English as 2nd Language/Age/Income/Education/Density

Demographic compositions were also analyzed as they revealed opportunities and challenges faced by the communities in Bushwick and Hunts Point. For example, the percentage of residents for whom English is the second language is an indication to provide language programs in the local library.

Income levels are another indicator that brings to light if the library is used for computer or internet access (homework, writing resume, looking for work,) or simply as an air-conditioned space to spend time and meet others.

Diversity studies, especially mapping the presence of minority groups indicates the vulnerable populations. Age is another such indicator. For example, presence of a young population is both an opportunity and a challenge especially if unemployment (or under-employment) as well as lack of education are prevailing characteristics of the community.

Lastly, density of the tributary service area is a useful metric for optimizing services per capita.

Civic infrastructure, like those central to our study, could strengthen their role in their local neighborhoods if their services are tailored to the needs of the

communities they are serving. Insights into communities’ expectations, desires, vulnerabilities, and strengths can make a positive difference in the reciprocal relationship between civic facilities and their communities.

### Facilities

We focused on public facilities such as the public library, police precinct, and urban plaza to understand how they engage with their neighborhoods. Our visits to the above facilities and interviews with the staff members provided valuable insights into the prevailing conditions. Urban plazas are exceptions as they do not have permanent on-site personnels to monitor or contribute towards engaging the public.

Although we were able to make visual references to the physical state of the facilities (PRODUCT), the existing culture by which these facilities are run and operated (PROGRAM) is another aspect that needs attention.

### NYC Library Systems and Public Libraries

While the City’s library systems have an understanding of how to facilitate services and where, there is no indication that their specific knowledge about their local users is communicated to the planners and designers in the process of renovation or new construction.

We used the data compiled by the Center for an Urban Future in our research as a guide for understanding the City’s three public library systems. We analyzed a library in the South Bronx to aide our study of New York Public Library system and a library in Brooklyn to understand the Brooklyn Public Library system. They are both part of the Carnegie library collection citywide.

***“The New York City Carnegie branch libraries were designed to be distinct structures, a new concept at the turn of the Twentieth Century when most branches were simply located in other buildings. They were intended to be important fixtures in the community and centrally located in a neighborhood. The Carnegie Committee had a policy to place branches in close proximity to public buildings such as schools, social service centers, public baths, or YM/YWCA’s. The Washington Irving Branch has played this civic role in Bushwick for nearly a century, especially since it is situated across the street from the Bushwick High School.***

***Bushwick, an area originally settled in 1660 by Governor Peter Stuyvesant with the name Boswijk, or “heavy woods,” was incorporated into the city of Brooklyn in 1855. As a result of the completion of an elevated railway in 1889, the once predominantly rural area experienced rapid development in the form of row houses and tenements, home to mostly German immigrants. Bushwick’s population growth in the 1890s led to a demand for numerous civic institutions such as public libraries.”***

<http://hdc.org/hdc-across-nyc/brooklyn/brooklyn-carnegie-libraries/washington-irving-branch>

The above excerpt from the Carnegie Library website reinforces contemporary views on making libraries part of the larger network of the City’s other public facilities and carefully assesses their placement within neighborhoods.

Operational since the early twentieth century, both the Carnegie Libraries are still valuable assets to their respective communities. While Hunts Point Library was recently renovated and in much better condition, the same cannot be said about the Irving Branch in Bushwick.

We also visited three recently built libraries in Queens which are part of the Queens Library system. Our inquiry into these libraries was simply to gain first-hand experience of the current approach in design and construction of similar public facilities.

Review and assessment of a ‘library as a public facility’ is a challenge as libraries come in different sizes and scopes assuming different roles in relation to their context. However analysis of both historic and newly constructed libraries gave us a unique understanding of what gets overlooked in the City’s library system. It is safe to say that since the facilities are within the Design and Construction Excellence program they do not lack a high standard of aesthetics.

We found that spatial constraints is a common problem to all libraries especially accommodating future demands and emerging services. While older libraries are struggling with spaces that are inaccessible due to building code compliance, newer libraries are simply built to maximum capacity determined either by the assigned budget or urban lot sizes.

### **NYC Police Precincts**

Owing to the nature of services rendered by law enforcement agency and their limited organizational transparency, it is harder to assess how design principles can contribute towards the betterment of community relations.

As part of our research assignment, we visited the 41st Precinct in Hunts Point in South Bronx and 83rd Precinct in Bushwick in Brooklyn. We were cordially received in both the police stations by the precinct teams and were given guided tours through the facilities. The fact that both of the facilities were built during the same era in the 80s allowed us better comparative analysis of their strength and challenges.

Common to both of the facilities is a central hallway with an imposing information desk approached by everyone. This space is simultaneously shared by detainees, community members sometimes including families with young children and precinct officers. The information desk and the raised platform behind it allows the officers visual surveillance across the hallway. This space poses a great challenges in creating a friendly environment for everybody.

In both facilities, rooms used for community meetings and muster rooms are not directly accessible from the outside. They are also relatively small to accommodate larger groups. Yet large areas are occupied by holding cells that are no longer in use since the city’s new regulations are not integrated into the facilities as much needed space.

Lastly, the prevailing geometry and the dated design approach of compartmentalizing programmed spaces makes it harder to adapt these facilities to current requirements.

We felt that the precinct in Bushwick was more crowded by the number of officers in relation to the size of the facility. It also posed greater maintenance challenges. In addition, the recessed doorway at the mitred corner of the building makes it hard for the main entrance to be visible from the public right-of-way.

### **Urban Plazas**

Unlike large public squares that are willfully designed and built, community public plazas are leftover spaces within the City’s colliding geometries on the ground. Given the City’s overwhelming density, the expansive impervious hard surface areas and lack of green spaces, development of these tiny urban plazas offers a great opportunity to improve the quality of life. These urban plazas can serve as acupuncture points to ease the City’s tension, lower the pace and

even contribute toward stormwater management. Since urban Plazas serve as an extension of the streets, they are unconditionally accessible to the public. During one of our initial interviews of architects on best practices, we were told the street was the space that immediately comes to the mind on being asked to visualize equity in the built environment

In addition to our daily encounter with the City's streets, sidewalks and plazas we also visited the Knickerbocker Plaza in Brooklyn and Monsignor Del Valle in the South Bronx to understand how urban plazas engage and activate the communities they serve. Since we were familiar with the design drawings of the two plazas we wanted to verify whether the intent was translated into reality. While the recently renovated Knickerbocker Plaza is one of six Department of Transportation plazas, the Monsignor Del Valle is a project by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The later is being considered for a face lift in conjunction with the elevator that connects the street to the subway level.

Located at the juncture of a busy commercial strip and public transportation, we confirmed that the plaza was in good use and well received by the surrounding neighborhoods. We saw many people relaxing under the shade of the elevated railway. We also met the caretaker, an employee of the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, who was there attending to his twice-daily clean-up duties and reaffirmed how busy the plaza is.

The same cannot be said about Monsignor Del Valle which extends over a much larger area in the midst of a very busy traffic and web of local streets and a high speed regional expressway. It is hard to pinpoint the challenges of such a large scale urban space that does not offer nuanced spatial configuration to encourage human interaction. The plaza is neither functioning as a effective green infrastructure nor an urban landscape providing shades to the public owing to unsustainable planting.

These pockets of urban spaces are important elements of urban life as they have the potential to connect the neighborhoods with the residents and communities. Activating the community through collective ownership would perhaps resolve some of the ongoing challenges concerning sustained caring for these urban facilities.

Although there are many civic infrastructure that makes the city work, this study focused on only three public facilities namely public libraries, police precincts and urban plazas. Looking through the type of public lenses of the facility and they engage with their communities, we observed that there exists an immense potential to activate connectivity at multiple levels.

**Web of Connectivity: Activate Stakeholder and Facility Connections**

One of the actions we undertook was to map the ‘web’ that exists among these facilities and other private or public civic service providers making the interconnections visible. In other words, we examined if the ‘web’ can have a more active presence or participation in the life of facilities - serving as a portal between facilities which utilize common community assets.

Since the facilities under review are public, and the primary users of these facilities are the communities, it is pivotal to understand what makes a community. A community is formed by those people who live and work in the service area of the facility and are the recipients of its services and benefits.

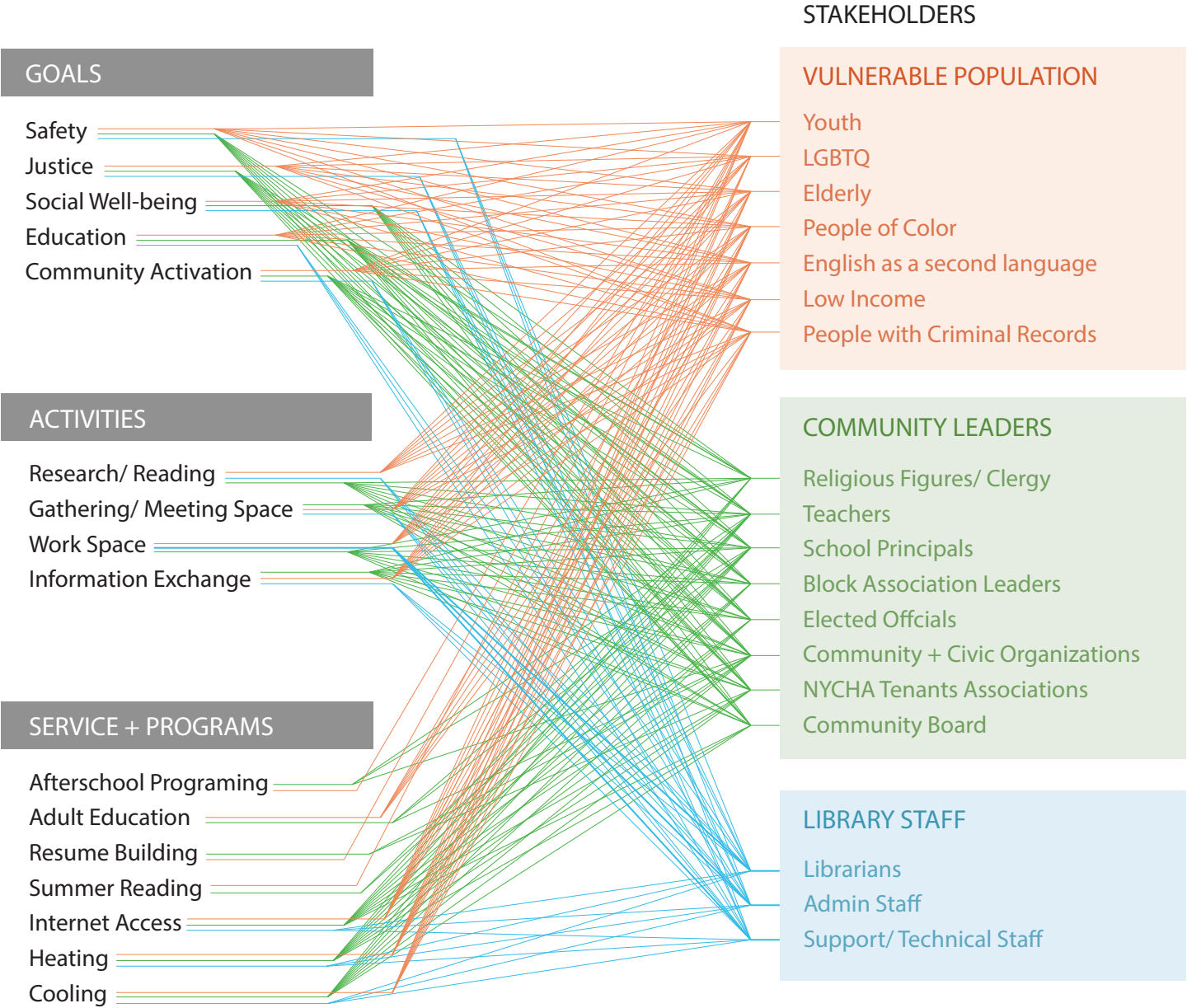
Demographic analysis reveals both the vulnerabilities and assets of a community. Viewing demographics through the lens of equity which prioritizes vulnerable and disadvantaged populations offers a starting point for equitable design. Understanding and responding to the needs of the demography within a service area through program, design and operation can ensure equity.

Strong community leaders and civic organizations are present in many communities such as South Bronx. These stakeholders are key assets and partners who can ensure the success of each facility’s program and operation. Likewise Police Athletic League, local school principals, along with precinct community liaisons and tenants or block associations all work together to create a supportive mesh of civic infrastructure in a precinct.

Like a site or a facility, each community has a specific set of needs and capital which can be answered and empowered through good design. Community Stakeholders represent the designer’s direct connection to the community capital. Meaningful engagement between the designer and community leadership is therefore essential to elicit both good design and empower community capital.

LIBRARY

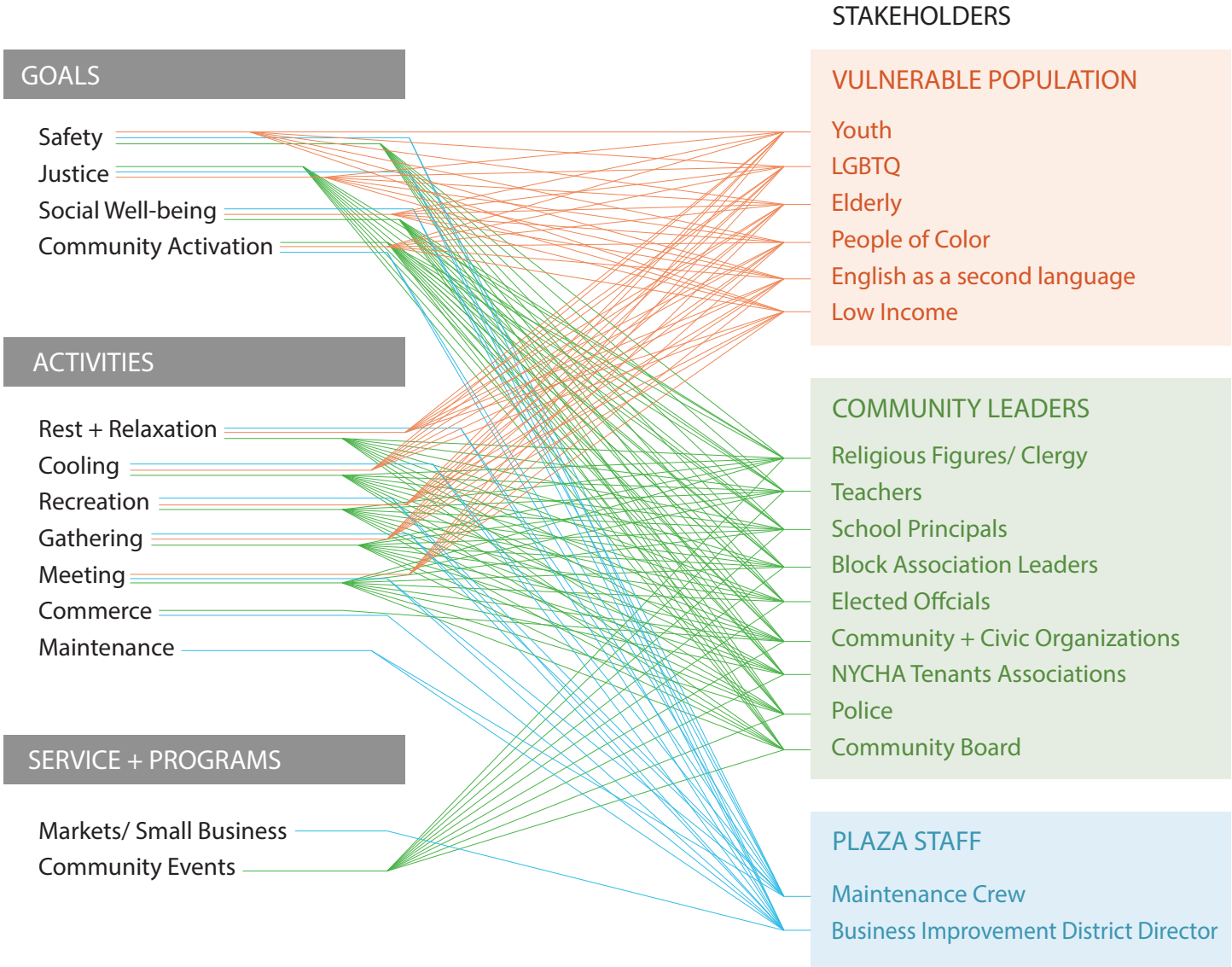
Service Area: 1 Mile Radius





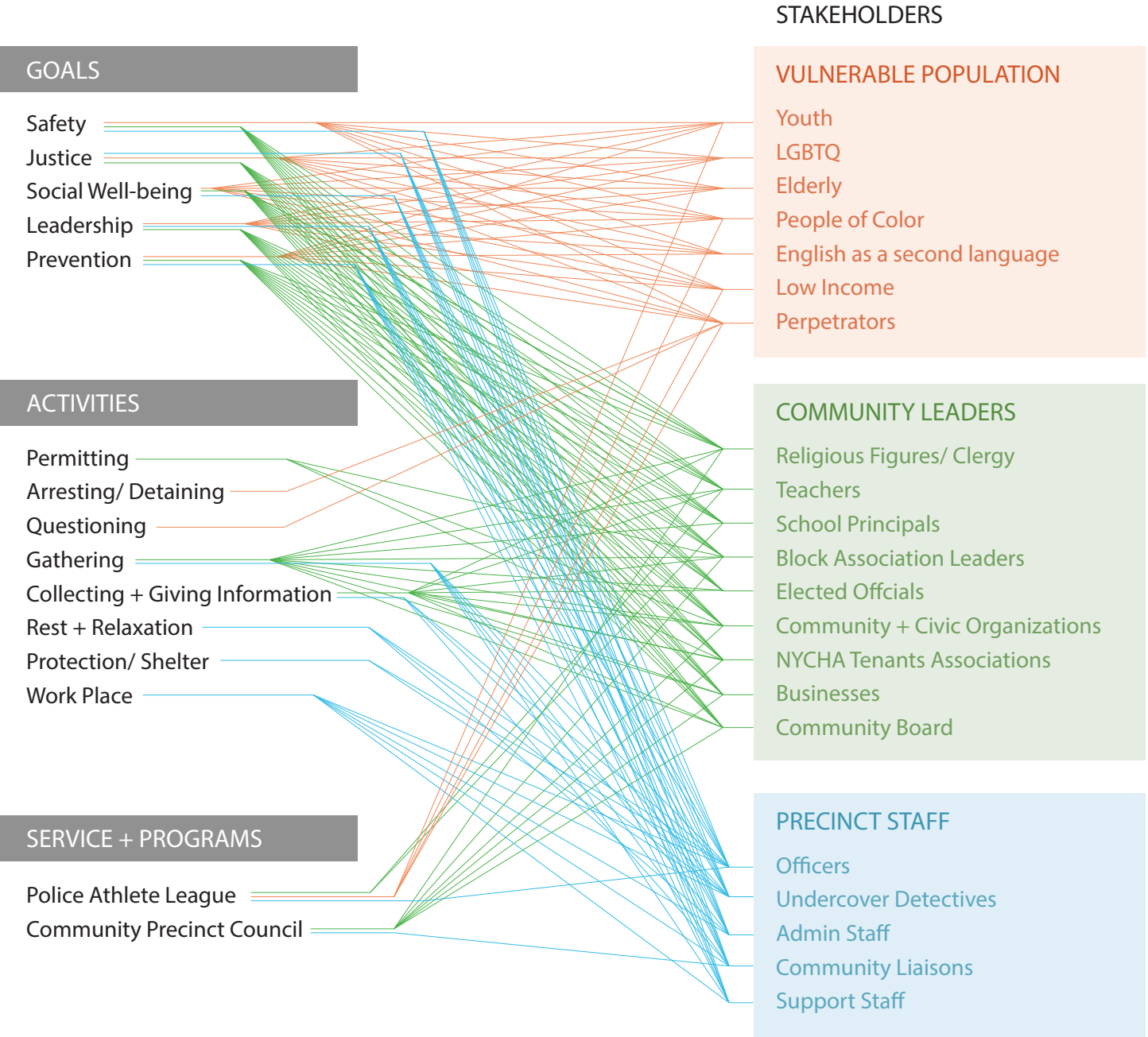
# PLAZA

Service Area: 1/2 Mile Radius



# PRECINCT

Service Area: Precinct Boundary





**How does the Design Community think about Equity?**

During our interview sessions with design professionals, we asked them to consider ‘equity’ in designing projects for the public. The response to our basic question ‘which spaces come to mind when thinking about EQUITY?’ was almost always ‘the street’ followed by ‘Grand Central Station’. Maybe latent in their responses, ‘accessibility’ was the primary objective when thinking of Equity. For example, Jonathan Kirschenfeld mentioned of making a city within a city when talking about circulation (spaces) within a building and emphasizing nuanced transition from public to private spaces.

The second common denominator frequently mentioned by many was ‘the creative act’ as the community asset and the idiosyncrasy of the facility viewed in its cultural and physical context. Furthermore, it was emphasized that responding not only to community’s needs but also to its character required a creative approach which could not be accomplished by prescriptive guidelines. Sometimes, exemplary work of architecture that is tailored for its context can emerge from critically questioning conventions, re-thinking programmatic and spatial relationships and innovative new interpretations. Deborah Gans and Jim Garrison emphasized how the generic approach would not yield great architecture while specificity could.

Lastly, the role of ‘creative act’ in designing a public facility was seen as a great opportunity for the City to invest, inspire and activate communities and enhance their participation in urban life.

**Interpretations of Equity**

In order to avoid the specificity of the facility types of our study and to understand the full potential of the term, we expanded the field as we looked for manifestations of ‘equity’ in the broader context of built environment. The eras of the late 60’s and 70’s were particularly interested in social aspects of the term,

especially when central Europe was recovering its’ economy and re-building its’ cities after WWII.

This was perhaps the second wave of modern thought when ideas of democracy influenced architecture greatly. Human wellbeing was central to design; ‘Mensch und Raum’ in Germany, and the work of Atelier Team X in England, Northern Europe, were only a few trends that come to mind. Perhaps for the first time, architecture as representation of a culture was not designed based on some divine proportion for the Gods but for the people, their wellness, service and ownership. Experiments were undertaken to explore how human beings perceived space or spatial organizations and ideas emerged to improve the quality of life in buildings through daylight engineering and natural ventilation.

Although some of these noble ideas about accessibility are hindered by the prevailing safety and security requirements (especially applicable for law enforcement facilities), we depict few elements, building components and related ideas that crossed our path during our entire investigation that could be considered in future interpretations of equity in the built environment.

**The In-between (interstitial) Space: The City in a Building**

This is the space that is captured within the wall as described by Saskia Sassen when she was writing about one of David Adjaye’s library projects. It is also found in IPA/Jonathan Kirschenfeld ’s housing projects and throughout the City’s leftover spaces between buildings, which often times do not have any identity or use. Sassen’s reference to the interstitial space is the cavity within the wall. By widening, the wall becomes less about delineating the inside from the outside. Instead it becomes more of an in-between space. This is very apparent in the Francis Gregory neighborhood library in WDC where the building’s 16-in thick exterior wall patterned with alternating diamond-shaped transparent and opaque surfaces. The ambiguity it achieves is beyond function.

In Kirschenfeld's public housing, the hallways form the interstitial space which are not just a mere means of egress but a social space where interactions take place. Here the architect makes sure that the hallways are daylighted and wide so that one can linger, perhaps go through the mail sitting on a bench in the lobby or next to the elevator and begin chatting with a neighbor. This is a space that is between the city (public) and the unit (private) but does not fully qualify to belong to either. Given the nature of the architect's work, the outcome is not a coincidence but a planned intervention in order to improve social interaction for underserved, misunderstood or simply disabled population of our society starting in their own territory.

This in-between condition as it relates to the urban plazas in the City deserves a closer look. The word 'Interstitial' is cited more frequently in medical dictionary relating to a medical condition than an urban. The dictionary describes the word as a 'space between structures or objects', similar to cavities between rocks. In the field of biology and medicine, interstitial may refer to any small space between biological structures, often referring to the space between cells.

In cities and urban environments, we find residual spaces everywhere. Sometimes are byproducts of setback requirements or unbuildable left over pockets of the city's colliding geometries. Sometimes, they are incidental spaces in public housing where the building layouts adhere to an abstract pattern. Kirschenfeld reminded us about the City's ongoing efforts to own these interstitial spaces within NYCHA properties and give them purpose and life so that they can better serve the residents rather than endanger them.

### **The Wall**

We have already mentioned the idea about manipulating the exterior wall and using the skin as a transition space rather than a mere wall delineating the inside from the outside. Moreover, the space that is contained within the wall, together

with varying degrees of transparency, can blur the boundary between inside and out or private and public spaces. For example, the transparency achieved through the use of structural glass became a symbol for openness and democracy - literally and metaphorically. The opposite holds true for buildings without windows. Communicating an idea through how open or closed a building appears is an important aspect in establishing the first contact with its visitors.

But the skin of the building has more than just symbolic functions as it is the membrane that regulates indoor-outdoor temperatures and exchange of other physical conditions. In our study we understand the role of the WALL and how it is reflective of cultures that exists in the systems the buildings house.

### **The Low vs. High Desks**

Beyond the 'wall', there are other building components that have the potential to contribute or exert how public facilities function and interact with their users. The autonomy of furniture came up during our interview with Deborah Gans and Jim Garrison as they talked about their Town & Gown project designing the Community Connection Pavilion for the Brownsville Police Precinct.

The psychological effect of 'room layout' (furniture layout in a room) and how it can either make a friendly/welcoming impression upon entry or exert authority/control is a known factor in the design discipline which is perhaps not considered carefully enough when designing public facilities. The information desks in police precincts and in public libraries are both places of power but have very different connotations. The power within the library is held by the public in their ability to access all of the library system resources whereas the power within the precinct is held by the officers. If 'change' is desired in the culture of the police or the library, it should begin at the altar of the first contact.

### Autonomy of Building Programs

Furthering the consideration of the central desk, we would like to continue with a number of program elements that can be compartmentalized within respective facilities, both in newly designed or existing-to-remain. It is worth reiterating the ideas suggested and submitted by Andrew Birman and Leslie Burger for the study of Re-Envisioning Branch Libraries which was coordinated by the Center for an Urban Future.

After analyzing spatial distribution and accessibility of the branch libraries they identified and itemized certain functions as compartmentalized building components. For example, children's reading area or resource hub are perceived as separate from the architectural shell, more as furniture. This approach opens up the opportunity to establish methods of standardization for these components in existing and new buildings.

### Flexible Room or BETA Room

While we are reviewing separate functions and their accommodations, it is worth thinking about the so called 'beta room' or the flexible room for future growth; more importantly a room for experimentation. A room for new/emerging programs as a response to changing needs is not superfluous, it is a necessity.

### The Program, Two Ways

This is another challenging term with many aspects and definitions as it relates to our study. In its simplest form the PROGRAM can be understood as it is used in the Seattle Public Library. There the architects have analyzed the relationship of each library function and the sequence of the (library) users steps calculating the amount of time one would spend to get desired information. Their study led the designers to a new method of spatial organization while mincing and mixing the program.

Similarly, the aspect of innovation in the design of Jim Garrison's Animal Shelter proposal does not reside in shape and form or fancy materials but by inverting the conventional layout of the animal shelter. In his proposal he placed the animal cages on the periphery and the staff in the center of the facility. This design move created many more animal holding cells each having a smaller number of animals, improving the quality of existence for all parties.

During our discussions about facilities and their success in reaching the communities they serve, it was often brought to our attention by our advisory committee members that PROCESS and PRODUCT were equally important. Hours of operation and the programs offered are just as relevant in evaluating the facility's success as design.

### Equity requires many

If we read into EQUITY everything we have observed, heard about and learned, we have to expand the field and include not only the 'users and uses' but also the makers (architects) and the facilitators (the city agencies) and the donors/funders. In other words, everyone who contributes to urban life, collectively elevating every single urbanite are active participants of this process.

The belief that architecture explicitly shapes human activities is unproven. However, architecture can be seen as 'social condenser', a term coined by the constructivist architect Moisei Ginzberg (1892-1946), referring to a spatial idea that architecture can transform and influence social behavior. This concept influences the designing of public spaces as a positive force that breaks down perceived social hierarchies of the users and that promotes socially equitable spaces.

***Social Condenser is... "Programmatic layering upon vacant terrain to encourage dynamic coexistence of activities and to generate through their interference, unprecedented events."***

Rem Koolhaas, 'Contents' (2004)

# Life of Public Buildings

## Current

Currently **DDC** serves as a project delivery role, engaged at the **design and construction** phases.

## Our Proposal



### 1.Ensuring Fair Distribution

Client agency capital projects are evaluated and refined by a comprehensive plan which analyses distribution of public resources within the community context.

### 2. Scoping/Programming

DDC requests design services, Scoping and programming of the facility is done collaboratively with the client agency, community stakeholders and contracted designers.

### 3. Pre-Design through Design

Throughout all design phases; DDC, the client agency and designer engage with community leaders and other facility users in an outcomes based approach linking design moves to factors or predictors of equity: Safety, Justice, Social Well-being and Education.

### 4. Construction

Agreeing upon the program design and budget prior to the construction phase will help streamline the process.

### 5. Maintenance

Post Occupancy, the client agency along with facility stakeholders and DDC, will enact a performance assessment to gauge the design intentions and outcomes as well as the facility's responsiveness to the community within its service area.



# A Tool for Understanding What Works

.....and measuring success of both the process and product of equitable design in our public facilities.

When considering the creation of a performance assessment tool, we felt it is important to acknowledge that many of the City’s police precincts, plazas and libraries are already in existence. It is a missed opportunity not only in applying the lens of equity to the design of new facilities but also in considering equity in the operations, programs and renovations of existing facilities. To evaluate performance in this context, we offer two sets of metrics - one aimed at evaluating the design and the other targeted toward evaluating the facility itself.

### Metrics of Design

Using an outcomes based approach for evaluating both the process and product of a project’s design. Linking design intentions to equity outcomes of safety, social well-being, justice and education.

For inspiration on how to assess the performance a facility’s design, we revisited Impact Design Hub’s “When Good Intentions Aren’t Enough: Linking Intent to Impact”. The article reflects on how a building might be conceptualized as part of a systemic and holistic intervention toward specific outcomes. “This outcomes-based approach, linking design moves to “factors” became a lens for assessing various options, prioritizing opportunities, and analyzing trade-offs.” As was mentioned many times in Marvel Architects interview, all projects have limitations. Ideally, an outcomes based approach with equity as a priority outcome offers the designer this lens to assess, prioritize and analyze design interventions within existing limitations. Continuing this approach further we expanded beyond the design process to consider how design services were

secured, the stages of community engagement and the responsiveness of the design to stakeholder/user needs.

- \_ Did the RFP for design services encourage stakeholder engagement and community partners?
- \_ Were design intentions derived from stakeholder/user outreach and linked to outcomes?
- \_ Did facility stakeholders, designers and the client agency collaborate throughout the design phase? What were the key engagement points and what were the resulting design interventions and their outcomes?

Analysis can also include metrics aimed at the design as a product:

- \_ % of publicly accessible space
- \_ Square footage of flexible space
- \_ The presence and square footage of activated public space

**Who does the evaluation and when?** These metrics can be considered by DDC during the design phase as well as revisited and reflected upon post occupancy/ project completion. Evaluation of the design intentions can then be fed back to design for Excellence firms and to further refine the Equity Principles and Guidelines.

### Metrics of the Facility

To evaluate the services, programs and spatial quality of the facility, enact behavioral mapping and space utilization analyses post occupancy and periodically throughout the life of the facility. Review these analyses in relation to the determined assets/needs and demographics of the service area. Join these exercises with the completion of stakeholder and facility connectivity tool to assess how the space and activities are accommodating (or not) the needs and assets of the service area community.



As stated in the Public Life of NYC Plazas from Gehl Studio and J. Max Bond Center....“Plazas have equitable beginnings but equity is later challenged by financial difficulties from ongoing maintenance costs and disparate fundraising capacities”. Ideally through DDC’s Equity Principles and Guidelines all new public facilities (under their purview) will have equitable beginnings. However, just as the report observes, they may all struggle to maintain equity throughout their use whether it be funding or connection to the community served. The combination of proposed analyses aims to allow for ongoing assessment relating the facility’s spatial quality and utilization to the needs of facility stakeholders and the equity outcomes of safety, social well-being, justice and education.

Additional metrics which can inform this process include:

- \_ % of public events held in the space
- \_ # and type of visitors as compared to service area demographics
- \_ # or % of civic partnerships
- \_ Maintenance and program budget as compared to service area demographics and needs.
- \_ Responses to request or complaint box
- \_ 311 Complaints
- \_ NYPD Community Survey (other agency surveys)
- \_ Space allocation as compared to community needs and assets

**Who does the evaluation and when?** These analyses can be done for each facility type every year by the facility stakeholders with the goal of collecting facility specific data which can be shared and used to steer future investment. They can be utilized and revised at times of renovation as well as provided as feedback to upper administration of the client agency and DDC. Ultimately providing a feedback loop for continual improvement of the client agency’s programs as well as DDC’s Equity Principles and Guidelines.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Service Area: \_\_\_\_\_

GOALS

- Safety
- Justice
- Social Well-being
- Education
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITIES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

SERVICE + PROGRAMS

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

STAKEHOLDERS

VULNERABLE POPULATION

Youth

LGBTQ

Elderly

People of Color

English as a second language

Low Income

\_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Religious Figures/ Clergy

Teachers

School Principals

Block Association Leaders

Elected Officials

Community + Civic Organizations

NYCHA Tenants Associations

Police

Community Board

PLAZA STAFF

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Objectives and Recommendations

Equal Opportunity does not yield equal outcomes. To be equitable, facility design, programming and operations need to respond to local conditions. In reality some NYC neighborhoods have greater needs than others. We offer a set of overarching recommendations framed by the objectives of Just Distribution, Flexibility and Ownership as the foundation of equitable design.

## Just Distribution

### Community Level Responses (Equity upstream from DDC) In the equitable distribution of resources citywide.

Create a mechanism to assess and plan for the equitable distribution of resources citywide including **the location of new facilities as well as the planning/execution of facility renovations.** Create a comprehensive, community centered planning process in which community assets and needs are collected and considered outside of any one client agency’s criteria. Client agency proposals for capital projects are then refined by this process to ensure they address community needs.

### In the operations and programming of facilities.

Arguably, in our current social climate, there is no greater need for connectivity between community and a facility than with the police precinct. The history and recent events of police sanctioned disruption and violence has created deep distrust and fear of our criminal justice system within black and brown

communities. As argued by Harvard Professor and Sociologist, Matthew Desmond, single acts of police aggression register in the collective memory of brown and black communities as a larger and longer pattern of violence and oppression. Going further to say, since acts of excessive police force have community consequences, cities need to implement community level responses. Community level or community based responses to performance indicators should be a practice for all facilities. Programs and services offered should reflect the needs and assets of the facility’s service area. Users should match the demographics of the service area.

## Environmental Justice

Address the Social Cost of Carbon and other Environmental Burdens. Mitigate localized carbon impacts of building systems and operations. Energy, Water, and Solid Waste systems associated with a facility should aim for neutrality in regards to their impact on the surrounding community. Create an environmental justice plan which prioritizes public goods investment and access to resources in Environmental Justice communities.

## Flexibility and Innovation

### Avoid Guidelines that are Formulaic or Prescriptive Offer freedom of interpretation to the designer

It is an oversimplification to identify specific equitable design guidelines for each facility. Entryways, exterior walls, furniture, materials and program are all considerations to achieve equity but their details cannot be dictated. Guidelines must allow for the design and program to respond to the needs and assets of the community. Creative interpretation of community needs and desires and responding to their unique character is not prescriptive but is essential to the creation of equitable space. Being too prescriptive with guidelines robs the

designer of the creative process to address each project and undermines the expression of a community’s unique social and cultural capital.

**Flexibility in Design Review**

Allow for the guidelines of equity to elicit innovation. Being too constrained in the review and interpretation of equitable design proposals can limit innovation. Keeping an open mind can create opportunities for designs to test out new ideas and services. Rely on the performance assessment of design intentions to inform future design reviews and enhance the guidelines overtime.

**Flexibility in Structures and Spaces.**

Building systems and spaces should be able to evolve and change overtime, accommodating multiple functions, programs and users.

**Ownership**

**Stakeholder Inclusion and Engagement in Programming, Design and Operations**

To achieve equity, users and more broadly the community must have a sense of ownership in the facility. To achieve ownership it is essential to engage local leadership and users in the programming, design and operations of our public facilities.

**Unite the Designer and Users at the Earliest Stages of Programming and throughout the Design Process.**

Ideally, all client agencies have their own mission, visions and strategic plans which are focused on responding to community/user needs. However, in our experience, this ideal is not always achieved. Allowing all users the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with designers is good practice and should be fostered.

They along with the client can translate community needs and capital into building design and program.

**Foster a Citywide Commitment to Equity**

Create a Standardized Process for Incorporating Equity Into and Across all Client Agencies. As we have learned from our designer interviews, positioning equity as a priority within each client agency would allow for more open and expansive design interventions by providing a counter to the more prescriptive and embedded standards such as security. Guidelines from DDC are not all that is needed to achieve equitable design and facility performance. Each client agency needs to adopt a commitment to equity themselves which is also coordinated citywide. The City of Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative, which embeds equity in all city agencies and offers Implicit Bias and Cultural Sensitivity training to all City employees can serve as a model.

# Research Team

## Principal Research Investigators

### Jaime Stein

Director of M.Sc. Sustainable Environmental Systems and Adjunct Associate Professor at Pratt Institute. Jaime’s academic research focuses on systems thinking integrated with community self-determination. Areas of focus include green infrastructure, equity and community based resilience. She is Co-Director of Pratt Institute’s Recovery, Adaptation Mitigation & Planning (RAMP) climate change adaptation initiative, is a founding member and Steering Committee Chair of the Stormwater Infrastructure Matters (S.W.I.M.) Coalition as well as the Collective for Community, Culture & the Environment. Ms Stein is also the Mayoral Appointee for the Atlantic Yards Community Development Corporation, Board of Directors.

### Zehra Kuz

Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Pratt Institute. Zehra Kuz is a registered Architect in New York and Connecticut and Adjunct Professor with CCE at Pratt Institute, School of Architecture, where she has been teaching since 1993. She is the principal of Oasis Design Lab (registered since 2002), a collaborative office for architecture and engineered design. Prior, she worked for Edward Larabee Barnes - J.M.Y. Lee Architects and later for SOM in New York where she was an active member of Professional Development Committee. Her approach to design is influenced by reciprocal relationships that exist between buildings, their occupants and the surrounding environment. Similar ideas inspired the exhibition “Autochthonous Architecture in Tyrol” accompanied by a catalog and the three-part symposium ‘The Organic Approach to Architecture’ which she co-authored with Deborah Gans. A Graham Foundation Grant funded the book under the same title

## Investigative Team

Ada Mitchev - B.Arch Architecture (candidate)

Yuting Chao -B.Arch Architecture (candidate)

Massi Surrat -B.Arch Architecture (candidate)

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Meera Vaidya -M.Sc Sustainable Environmental Systems

Yubi Park -B.Arch Architecture

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