Design as a catalyst for creating impact in cities

By Stephanie Wade and Ruben Ocampo

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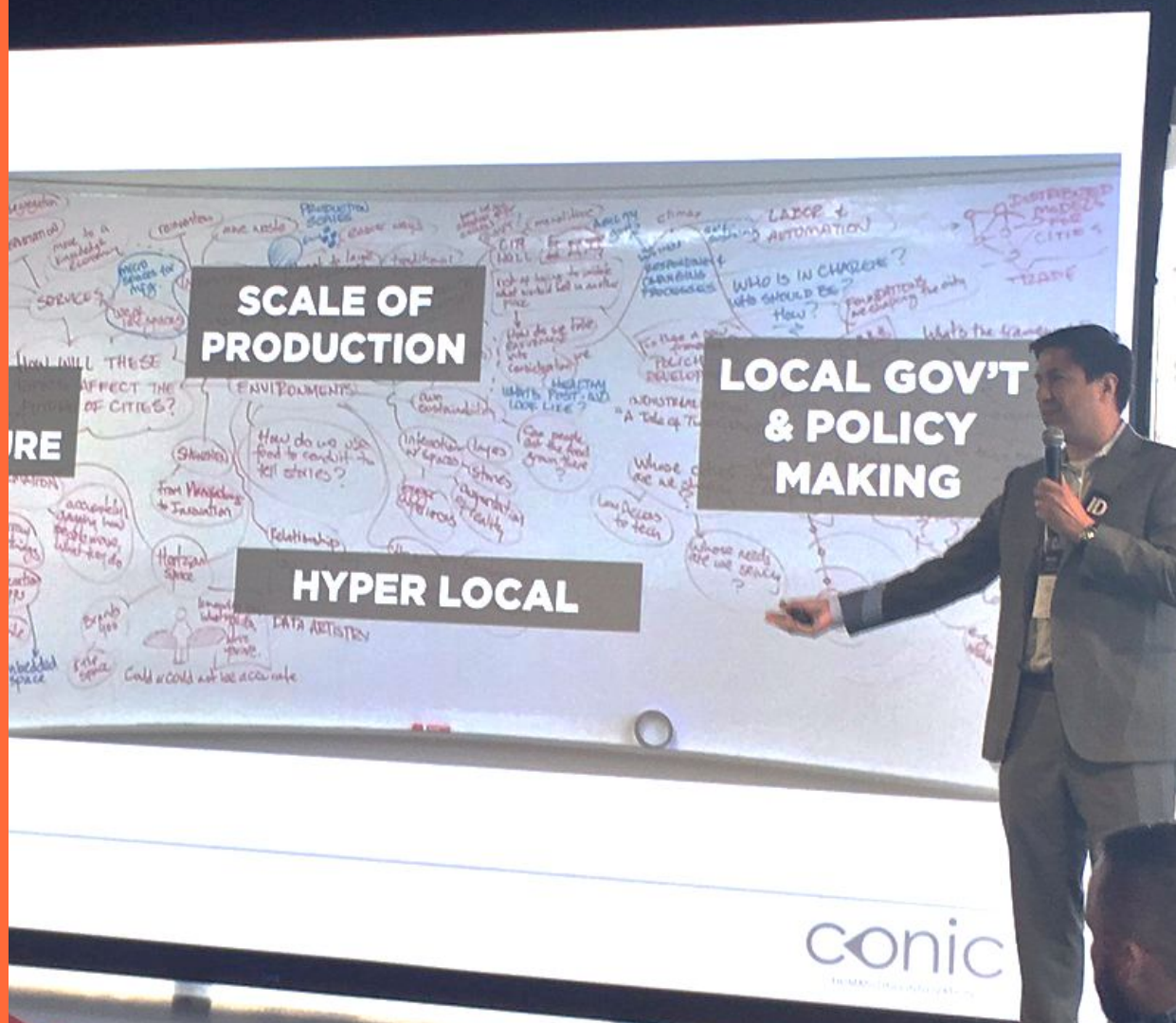
Stephanie Wade

Stephanie has been working in civic design for over a decade at Federal and City levels around the world. She is the former Director of the US Federal Government's first HCD lab, and was lead for Government Innovation and Design at Bloomberg Philanthropies.
Currently she is the CEO and Founder of Ascendant and adjunct faculty at IIT's Institute of Design. She holds a Masters in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and AB in Sociology and Fine Art from Boston College.



Ruben Ocampo

Ruben has been a design practitioner for over 20 years.
Prior to launching in 2011 Conic he held design management positions at McDonald's Corp, 2nd Road and PwC.
He is a city innovation coach with Bloomberg Philanthropies Adjunct Faculty at the IIT Institute of Design in Chicago.
Ruben holds a Masters degree in Design from the IIT Institute of Design, a MBA from Loyola University Chicago, and a bachelor's degree in Industrial Design from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogota, Colombia.



Cities play a critical role in shaping people's lived experiences

City government plays a critical role in society:

- **Governance**
- **Citizen engagement**
- **Urban planning**
- **Economic development**
- **Service delivery**
- **Equity & Inclusion**

… and people in City Halls wear multiple hats to perform these roles.



Steward of the built space



Facilitator/ matchmaker



Financier



Hero



Enforcer



Futurist



Humanitarian



And many more…

We have a problem with ***DILAPIDATED PROPERTIES.***

What is the problem that we are trying to solve?



Common, persistent challenges require systemic approaches



Common, persistent challenges require systemic approaches



5 key factors to create value through service design at the city level

1. Build buy-in and support from senior leaders
2. Create a safe space to support creativity
3. Set projects up for success early on
4. Use design as a platform to build equity
5. Measure impact of projects to scale service design city-wide

1. Build buy-in and support from senior leaders

- Establish their support and willingness at the outset of your work
- Build credibility and urgency
- Breakdown roadblocks
- Champion innovation publicly
- Score small, early wins

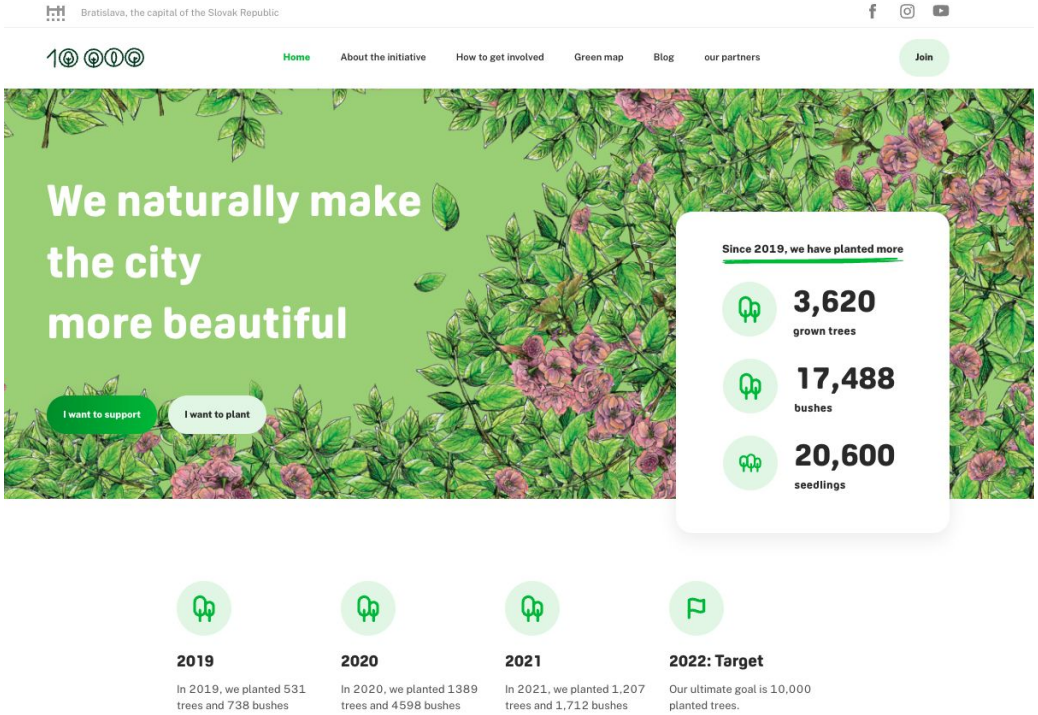


Source: City of Los Angeles, California

Case study

Bratislava, Slovakia

Score small early wins to build momentum and support for tackling bigger, longer term challenges



2. Create a safe space to support creativity

- Embrace the complexity and trust the process
- Create diverse cross-departmental team that uncover root causes and develop innovative ideas
- Model psychological safety



Source: City of New Orleans, Louisiana

3. Set your projects up for success early on

- Focus on one or a few key issues
- Gartner support inside and out of City Hall
- Tell the story of the work
- Plan for longevity



Source: Bloomberg Cities

4. Use design as a platform to build equity

- Reframe the role of residents as co-creators
- Give an authentic seat at the table from day one
- Engage throughout the project

Durham's Chuck Manning "...built a bridge between our community and justice-involved residents. He was able to have conversations in a matter of months that would have taken us years."

- Ryan Smith



Case study

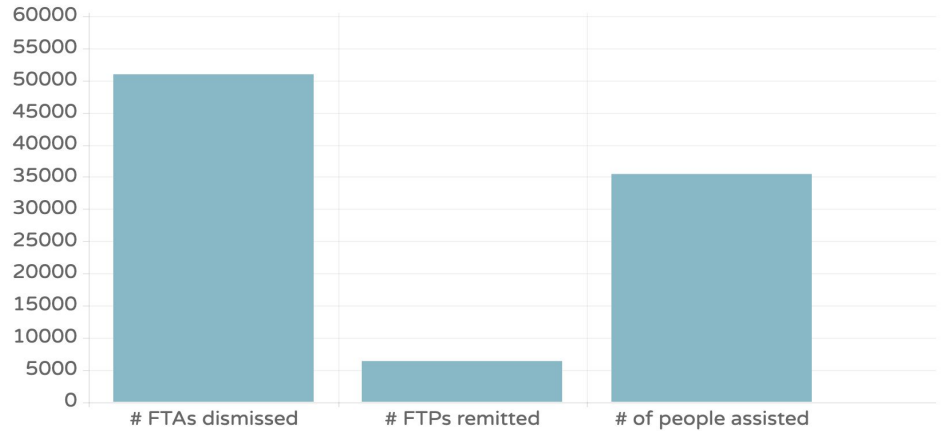
Durham, North Carolina

Commit to creating real change

They helped dismiss over 50,000 charges and waive over $2.7M in old traffic tickets for more than 35,000 residents, and process over 1,200 petitions for expungements.

GETTING MORE PEOPLE SAFELY BACK ON THE ROAD AND BACK TO WORK

NUMBER OF TRAFFIC CHARGES (FTA) DISMISSED & UNPAID TRAFFIC TICKETS (FTP) REMITTED THAT ARE CAUSING LONG-TERM DRIVER LICENSE SUSPENSIONS



Source: https://www.deardurham.org/impact-1

5. Measure impact to scale service design city-wide

- Balance between quick wins and long-term impact innovations
- Earn the right to scale
- Measure what matters most



Develop an ‘Impact Measurement Framework’ to **Plan for Sustainability**

Inputs

Resources that are deployed to spark change

Outputs

Tangible, immediate practices or results seen from the deployment of inputs

Outcomes

Changes in the environment or new observed behaviors that follow the delivery of new services

Impact

Strategic change seen over time as a result of the achievement of outcomes

Measurable easily and immediately

More nuanced, measurable over time

Hard to measure, can’t isolate to a specific program, may take several political cycles to track

Case study

Medellín, Colombia

Improving mobility for residents of low-income neighborhoods



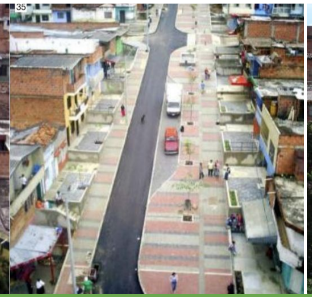
Legacy investment





Flagship initiatives







Quick wins

5. Measure impact to scale service design city-wide

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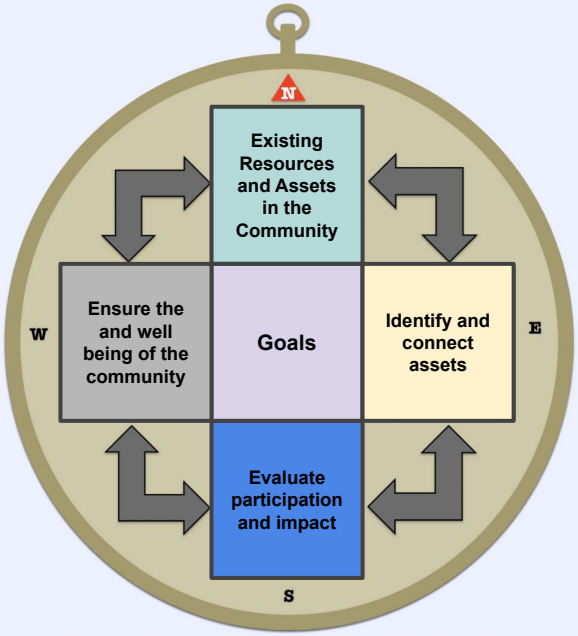
Cities can generate more bold, comprehensive system level change by building successful partnerships with diverse community stakeholders

Transition the role of government to be a leader in convening and co-creating with the community

Questions cities should explore to create sustainable community-driven development

- What human, social and organizational assets exist in the community?
- How do we engage them meaningfully, especially those that have been historically underrepresented?
- How can we identify sponsors to transition from ideas to prototypes with clear roles for implementation?



This is not a map, but a compass. Start with any element, but go to every element.

Source:https://www.abundantcommunity.com/the-four-essential-elements-of-an-asset-based-community-development-process/

Case study

Mobile, Alabama

Building equity by tackling dilapidated housing

After trying to tackle the inequitable problem of dilapidated properties impacting the Africatown section of the city, they were able to reduce these properties by

58% in 3.5 years.



Source: [Photo: William Widmer/Redux Pictures for *Fast Company*]
https://www.fastcompany.com/90298534/blight-is-eating-american-cities-heres-how-mobile-stopped-it

Engage a third party facilitator to support honest and equitable conversations about value exchange

Having the help of a neutral, seasoned facilitator:

- Rebalances the power scale from those who are “Most Influential” to those who are “Most Impacted”
- Shifts the conversation from “either/or” to “yes/and”
- Pushes interested parties to embrace tension and conflicting desires as creative input, and to avoid compromise as the default



Case study

Chicago, USA

Revitalizating the Pullman Historic District

Stakeholder Value Map

RESIDENT GROUPS AND CIVIC LEADERS

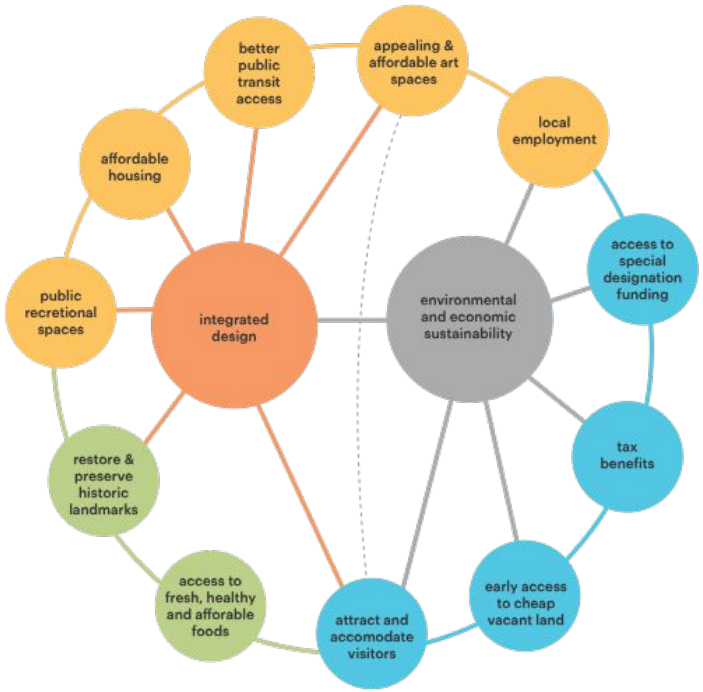
PullmanArts
Alderman Anthony Beale (9th)

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, NGOs AND NOT-FOR-PROFITs

The Historic Pullman Foundation
The Pullman Civic Organization
Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI)
AIA Chicago
Mercy Housing
National Parks Conservation Association
ArtSpace
World Business Chicago

URBAN PLANNERS AND ARCHITECTS

Gordon Gill Architecture
Smith Group
Studio Gang
Bauer Latoza Studio
McGuire Igleski Associates
Altus Works, Brush Architects
Moody Nolan
Farr Associates
Griskelis Young Harrell
Ross Barney Architects
Christopher Burke Engineering
TYLin
Jacobs
Sam Schwartz Engineering
Market & Feasibility Advisors



GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

National Park Service
City of Chicago

INVESTORS AND DEVELOPERS

US Bank

SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE BUSINESSES

Gotham Greens

LARGE EMPLOYERS

Walmart
Whole Foods
Method

Questions/ Comments?

Contact us:

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- Use design as a platform to build equity
- Measure impact to scale service design city-wide

How can cities can generate bolder, more comprehensive system level change?

- Create an innovation portfolio that proactively engages diverse stakeholders as co-creators
- Engage a third party facilitator to support honest and equitable conversations about value exchange

Thank you!



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Spotlight City Impact
Paris, France turned playgrounds into heat wave shelters across the city.