Here & Now exhibition curated by Form & Seek during the 2021 Detroit Month of Design. Photo by Noah Elliot Morrison.
Design Core made a difference in the success of a growing network of diverse designers.

Design Core delivered 750+ individual services to Detroit Design Network members and non-members, which included connections to resources and new business opportunities, educational programming, coaching, promotion and more.

Additionally, we organized, hosted and / or delivered over 30 events, programs or presentations to educate, advocate for, or promote the Detroit Design Network. All of Design Core’s programs are aligned to promote the value of Detroit designers.
The Detroit Design Network increased from 89 members to 110 members:

- 89 in 2020
- 110 in 2021

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<th>BASIC</th>
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33% of the Detroit Design Network identifies as minority owned, which is much higher than the national average of BIPOC designers working in design.

Design Core’s Business Programs department organized and hosted premier level industry meetings on challenges, resources and opportunities related to diversifying and developing the talent pipeline in the design industry.
Design Core drove new business and opportunities to Detroit designers.

We did this by:

- Connecting Detroit Design Network members to potential clients and new business opportunities through our List, Post, Host service.
- Awarding commissioned opportunities to Detroit designers through Detroit Month of Design and other programs
- Connecting Network members and other designers to partners and other programs that can support their revenue growth
“The Design Network has introduced us to amazing clients and even better partners. Hope Starts Here. A big win for us recently was nurtured through the design salon process in which we partnered on a pitch with other Detroit designers in the network. Our collaboration has been successful and we’re preparing for an extension of our work with that client.”

–MATT DIBBLE, FINAL5, DETROIT DESIGN NETWORK MEMBER

“The Downtown Detroit Partnership worked with Design Core Detroit to identify a local artist and fabricator for the new Detroit Sign which saved us time, money and capacity to move forward confidently with this project. It was highly beneficial to partner with Design Core Detroit on this project!”

–DOWNTOWN DETROIT PARTNERSHIP

Design Core developed a new and improved user experience on our website for businesses to connect with design talent.

CCS launched a new Minor in Entrepreneurship for its undergraduate students in part thanks to consultation from Design Core.

As an effort to feed the design pipeline, we continued to host workshops and design education around Design Guide for Real Estate Development and Design Guide for Neighborhood Business.

Design Core partnered with Kickstarter to provide SWOT Assessments, 1-1 coaching, group training and ongoing technical support to 6 local design projects interested in launching crowdfunding campaigns on the platform.

- TruckTruck, a sharable pop-up and mobile design workshop supporting local creatives and teaching maker skills, executed the first successful campaign, earning $13K in donations to launch.
- All of the participants were women
- 4 of the 6 projects were led by people of color.
We raised awareness on the process of Inclusive Design and implemented accessible design opportunities to our neighborhoods and local businesses.
The Detroit City of Design Challenge by numbers:

- **7** Inclusive Design Training Sessions
- **1** Design Clinic with **7** guest reviewers
- **17** Talks, **5** workshops and demos, and **2** virtual tours
- **32** Guest Speakers and workshop organizers
- **1** Popsicle social, **3** coffee meet ups, and **1** happy hour
- **1** Challenge Showcase

Shared Database with over **75** videos, toolkits, books, and other resources related to community tech

**3** winning teams split **$60,000**

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1. **18th Street Design-Build Green Tech Hub - $30,000**  
   *by Tanya Saldivar-Ali, Luis Ali, Seann Lewis, & Rachel Harb*  
   The goal of 18th Street Design-Build Tech Hub is to build and launch a community tech-lab and online design-build resource portal to strengthen Detroit’s Design-Build Ecosystem. The physical hub space will host in-person workshops, and the design-build resource portal will host educational content created during the hub development and beyond.

2. **Underground Music Academy - $18,000**  
   *by Robert “Waajeed” O’Bryant, ill Weaver, and Sterling Toles*  
   The Underground Music Academy (UMA) is a Detroit-based community music hub, which aims to build the future leaders of electronic music through its distinctive educational curriculum and mentorship model, rooted in Detroit’s Black electronic music legacy.

3. **Crosstown Connection - $12,000**  
   *by DaTrice Clark, Ian Klipa, and Jacob Saphier*  
   Crosstown Connection aims to service Detroit’s Morningside community and aid in closing the digital divide by providing resources for connectivity. The name Crosstown Connection honors the bus route that once ran the furthest distance across the city.

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Design Core, the College for Creative Studies, and Connect313 launched the Detroit City of Design Challenge as a platform to develop ideas that improve access and opportunity in Detroit through the practice of inclusive design.

Chosen through a competitive selection process, six teams made up of designers, residents and other community stakeholders developed concepts to address the digital divide in Detroit neighborhoods through community tech projects. Teams received inclusive design training and other resources and professional support.

This program was made possible by the generous support from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Lear, DPL Foundation, Bluewater, the William Davidson Foundation, and Pophouse.
In collaboration with the College for Creative Studies (CCS) and Urban Manufacturing Alliance (UMA), Design Core Detroit hosted the first Design Jam for adaptive apparel and accessories. Sixty-five participants and 6 teams were challenged to use an inclusive process to create accessible new products for active people with limb loss during Detroit Month of Design.

This program was made possible by the generous support from Foot Locker, Best Tool & Engineering, Carhartt, Square, Detroit Pistons and State Farm.

Teams were first trained in both anti-ableism and the practice of inclusive design. The Design Jam achieved the following:

- Brought together design and manufacturing for the purpose of innovating new adaptive products that could be designed, prototyped and made in Detroit.
- Raised awareness of the ableism biases that often exclude people with disabilities from the design process.
- Trained students, faculty, professional designers, manufacturers, makers, entrepreneurs, business coaches and individuals from the limb loss community on the process of inclusive design and encourage them to adopt it in their practice, and
- Facilitated new connections and business partnerships for local and national designers, manufacturers, partners and sponsors.
The 2019 Detroit City of Design Competition prototypes were installed

After a yearlong delay due to COVID, Design Core worked with community partners at Hope Village Revitalization, Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, and Southwest Detroit Business Association to install the prototypes developed from the 2019 competition in their neighborhoods for testing. The works were installed and showcased during 2021 Detroit Month of Design. Two of the prototypes have found permanent homes. Other Work is taking ownership of Garden Novella and will store it until a permanent home is found. They will work with SDBA to find a place in Southwest.

This competition was funded by the Knight Foundation and National Endowment of the Arts.

The winning businesses of the 2020 Commerce Design Refresh Grant implemented their projects:

- **Avalon International Breads - $20k**
  Avalon used the funds to improve their outdoor seating experience and tweak their front-of-house experience for customers.

- **SpaceLab Detroit - $10k**
  SpaceLab Detroit used the funds to make their space safer and more functional for members who need access to their design library, equipment, and other resources.

- **FOLK Detroit - $20k**
  FOLK used the funds to pivot from a sit-down cafe to a grab-and-go spot for meals, limited groceries, and a cafe with limited lunch counter seating.

*Thanks to Bank of America for their generous support.*
We hosted the largest Detroit Month of Design to date, featuring a return to in-person events and showcasing a diverse range of voices across the community.

Art in the Garden hosted by Feedom Freedom Urban Growers Inc. and College for Creative Studies, community+public arts: DETROIT during the 2021 Detroit Month of Design. Photo by Noah Elliot Morrison.
**Event Break Down**

- **20 Exhibitions**
- **17 Workshops**
- **12 Talks**
- **4 Open Studios**
- **4 Youth & Family**
- **9 Experiences**
- **8 Tours**
- **11 Installations**

**Festival Numbers**

- **116 Applicants**
  - 40% first time applicants
- **85 Events**
  - 72 in person events
  - 13 virtual events
- **150+ Designers & Participants**
  - 30% of participants identify as BIPOC
- **60 Unique Locations**
- **12 Neighborhoods**
- **50k Attendees**
- **$100,000 Invested Back into the Creative Economy through Stipends and Hiring Local Talent**
These efforts resulted in:

- 290% increase in web page views from 25k to 98k
- Launched a retargeting campaign and reached 279,696 unique users through addressable Geo Fencing tactic
- Outdoor advertising included two billboards, window decals and 60 street grips throughout Detroit
- 55 pieces of media coverage with a listener-ship and viewership of 237,565,817
- 1,000 new social media followers in two months
- 5 media partnerships with Azure, Design Milk, WDET and Playground Detroit

We expanded the festival’s visibility by increasing our marketing and advertising efforts through retargeting ad campaigns, more outdoor advertising, and continued ad buys, media partnerships and more.

“Throughout the month of September, Design Core Detroit’s partners - ranging from established companies and institutions to emerging practices, will unite to showcase their latest creative endeavours at various locations citywide.”

— JERRY ELENGICAL, STIRWORLD

“Organized by the Design Core Detroit, this citywide network of marquee openings, intimate studio visits, provocative installations and artistic interventions engages the local community and offers future-forward urban solutions.”

— DAVID GRAVER, COOL HUNTING

*Through media that span from furniture to fashion and everywhere in between, Detroit designers are pondering some of the world’s most pressing issues in their work, especially those truths brought to even more clarity during the pandemic including the nation’s lack of affordable housing, a desire to mitigate climate change and inclusive design for all.*

— ELIZABETH FAZZARE, CULTURED

*“With more than 150 participants that will put on 80+ events and projects throughout the month, this year’s show is shaping up to be the best one yet.”*

— VY YANG, DESIGN MILK

**PRESS QUOTES**
We continued to expand our network of local and national sponsors, attracting two title sponsors.

33 corporate sponsors including:

- 2 title sponsors for the first time in the festival history: Rocket Companies and William-Davidson Foundation.
- 12 national brands
- 20 returning sponsors
- 13 new sponsors

Sponsors drive business opportunities for our Detroit Design Network and expand the reach of the festival.

Through a Rocket Companies title sponsorship, we awarded $25,000 to Yazmin Dababneh for her Moments of Immersion exhibition, setting a record for the largest festival design commission to date.

This program was made possible by the generous support from Rocket Companies, William Davidson Foundation, Hudson Webber Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts, College for Creative Studies, Gardner White, Downtown Detroit Partnership, Foot Locker, Kickstarter, The Platform, Rocket Community Fund, Erb Family Foundation, Detroit Historical Society, DPL Foundation, Display Group, Herman Miller, Ford, Central Michigan University Fashion Merchandising & Design, Detroit Pistons, Ford House, Best Tool & Engineering, Digital Print Specialties, American Liquor Co, Carhartt, State Farm, CCS CAP, MoGo, Design Milk, Azure, Playground Detroit, and WDET.
Design Core and the City of Detroit are positioned as thought leaders locally, nationally and internationally.

A Guided Garden Tour of Detroit's Oudolf Garden hosted by Oudolf Garden Detroit during the 2021 Detroit Month of Design. Photo by Noah Elliott Morrison.
Autofiction Exhibition Travels to Detroit

Around Autofiction is a traveling exhibition and conversation hosted by Unesco Creative Cities of Design including Detroit, Geelong, Graz, Kortrijk, Puebla, Saint-Étienne and Torino. These inspiring projects draw a portrait of the research carried out by designers and companies through these Unesco Creative Cities of Design and outlines the transversality of the issues raised by the question of the mobility of the future. CCS, in collaboration with Design Core Detroit and the State of Michigan, Office of Future Mobility and Electrification, hosted the exhibition as part of Detroit Month of Design.

The Design Core team continued to be sought after leaders and partners, both in and out of Detroit. Staff served or shared at conferences, panel discussions, podcasts, radio shows and more in Detroit, throughout the state, and throughout the global creative cities network. Design Core presented at 20+ engagements including:

- The 2021 AICAD Conference
- Kortrijk’s XPO Conference
- WRLDCTY
- Sustainable Design Forum/Dutch Design Week
- DesignTO
- Urban Land Institute’s Spring Meeting
- World Economic Forum Urban Transformation Summit
- & more!
As stewards of Detroit’s UNESCO City of Design designation, we raised awareness of how design can create conditions for better quality of life and economic opportunity for all. In season 3, we heard from thought leaders who view our world through a lens of empathy and apply design thinking to address some of our world’s most pressing issues.

Season 3 guests and topics included:

Joshua Edmonds and Cézanne Charles on the Intersection of Design and Community Technology

Chris Cornelius on Embedding Indigenous Thinking into Architecture (Part 1)

Chris Cornelius on Decolonizing Education and Design (Part 2)

Tanya and Luis Saldivar on Creating new Talent Pipelines

Dessa Cosma, Jeannette Lee, and Saundra Little on Designing Detroit’s Most Accessible Place

LinYee Yuan on the Role of Design in the Food System

Sandy Fershee on Human-Centered Design and the Automotive Industry

Dr. D’Wayne Edwards on Fueling the Future of Footwear

Hanna Harris on How Design Can Help Develop a Functional City

17k PODCAST DOWNLOADS
Design Core looks to 2022 with excitement as it enters the next chapter of the organization’s development. We will continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of our community and audience.

- Sharpening our focus across all of its programs from the Detroit Design Network to Detroit Month of Design on supporting Detroit design business community in pursuing growth opportunities
- Increasing efforts to promote diverse design talent to potential clients or employers
- Introducing our new inclusive design training curriculum to more partners in business and community
- Launching the 2022 City of Design Challenge exploring how we might begin to build social connections in times of turmoil.
- Finding more ways to work with the College of Creative Studies, our home base since 2010, to support the college’s strategic priorities while fulfilling our mission of positioning Detroit as a global source of creative talent. This includes potential experiential learning opportunities and launching the Guide for Community Projects with the College for Creative Studies.
- Updating the Design Guide for Neighborhood Business to include a more robust digital design content
- Enhancements to the overall user experience for patrons of the Detroit Month of Design festival
Thank you to our supporters!

Design Core Detroit is a part of the College for Creative Studies. Our mission is to position Detroit as a global source of creative talent. This work is made possible through the support of many generous funders, sponsors and donors.