

Detroit Driving Innovation in Inclusive Design, New Report Shows

Advocacy Nonprofit Design Core Detroit Forms Partnerships with Residents, Groups, City to Develop Talent and Inclusive Policies, Encourage Investment, Meet Diverse Needs

DETROIT – April 11, 2019 – Design Core Detroit, steward of the only U.S. city officially designated as a City of Design by UNESCO, unveiled today “Inclusive Design Together: Detroit City of Design Monitoring Report,” the design advocacy nonprofit’s latest release showcasing the progress of inclusive design projects across the city. According to the report, more than 70,000 Detroit residents were reached through 62 design projects that engaged schoolchildren, women, LGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities, entrepreneurs and professionals through 52 partner-organizations.

The progress report outlines the collective impact of the 52 partner-organizations and profiles three major projects of 62 through case studies. Design Core Detroit’s work, developed with its local partners, will be presented in Italy at the UNESCO Creative Cities Network Annual Convening in June by a Design Core Detroit delegation to share critical outcomes and best practices for global engagement and adoption.

“Inclusive design is the way we are moving our great city forward, ensuring that no community is left out,” said Olga Stella, executive director of Design Core Detroit. “Detroit’s industrial and modern design legacies helped us secure our UNESCO designation and seed this movement, but institutionalizing and documenting our grassroots approach is what will keep it growing. We are excited to see others learn from what our partners are doing in Detroit.”

Detroit is the first and still only U.S. city designated as a City of Design among 31 international cities focused on using creativity as a driver for sustainable and equitable development throughout the world, as part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, or UCCN. Detroit also is the only City of Design that is deploying a grassroots approach to execute its 2018 to 2025 Action Plan, working with its partners – designing the redevelopment of Detroit with residents, not for them. One-third of local partners obtained additional grants to implement their projects.

Featured projects include the launch of Commerce Design: Detroit, an awards program and recognized best practice of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, licensed from Montreal, Canada. The award is now headed to Belgium with a new design guide created by Design Core Detroit for small businesses.

Other projects in the report include a new bike-sharing program for people with severely limited physical mobility and resident-led revitalization projects in Detroit neighborhoods.

“MoGo is designed to serve a wide range of people and needs, and the addition of adaptive bikes to our fleet reflects our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility,” said Lisa Nuszkowski, founder and executive director, MoGo Detroit Bike Share. “We’re proud to make MoGo available to people of all abilities, and expand mobility options for people in Detroit.”

A coalition of 52 local businesses, nonprofits, public agencies and institutions was formed as a result of the Detroit City of Design Action Plan, implementing projects to help transform Detroit into a global center for the practice of inclusive design. These partners created an ecosystem of 239 reported connections, demonstrating the strength of the coalition. New partners will be added in the coming years to ensure new design talent and ideas are cultivated to address the full and diverse spectrum of the city’s cultural, mobility and redevelopment needs.

The creative economy in the Detroit region represents only 5 percent of all occupations, but it feeds a design ecosystem that accounts for 20 percent of the region’s economy and \$2.5 billion in annual wages, making it a key pillar of the region’s revitalization and growth.

For the full report, please download: <https://bit.ly/2OYAavi>. To learn more, visit www.DesignCore.org or follow Design Core Detroit on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

For video footage of Detroit’s inclusive design projects and College of Creative Studies Equitable Mobility Project, please download: <https://vimeo.com/299316032> and <https://vimeo.com/297329260>.

For still images of a Commerce Design: Detroit award-winning space and MoGo’s bike-sharing mobility options, please download: <https://bit.ly/2Uxl41>.

DETROIT CITY OF DESIGN -- PROJECT SUMMARY

Detroit Equitable Mobility Project

Design students at the College of Creative Studies, a City of Design partner, worked with Detroit residents, nonprofits and design professionals to develop public mobility solutions that better meet current and future needs. Their work was chosen to be part of “The Road Ahead: Reimagining Mobility,” an exhibition at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York.

City of Design Research Lab

The College of Creative Studies and Design Core Detroit are planning to launch in fall 2019 the City of Design Research Lab for interdisciplinary knowledge-gathering through academic study, grantmaking for physical system and product prototyping, and exhibitions and convenings for experts and stakeholders.

Adaptive MoGo Bike Program

Another Detroit City of Design partner, MoGo, created special bike options, part of the city’s MoGo bike-sharing program, for people with physical and cognitive impairments. Adaptive MoGo is only the second program of its kind in the U.S., placing Detroit at the forefront of inclusive design research for neighborhood development on a global scale.

Commerce Design: Detroit Award Recipient

A Detroit coffee shop, laundromat and community center, The Commons, won an inaugural Commerce Design: Detroit Award for creating a highly functional and contemporary space with help from professional designers. The award celebrates the positive impact made by well-designed spaces. It also increases competitiveness in the local design marketplace and helps preserve neighborhood identity. For its part, The Commons has spurred positive social and economic change, helping to stabilize the neighborhood and drawing visitors and tourists. The project also gave rise to the development of “Design Guide: Neighborhood Business” by Design Core Detroit for small business owners to access free resources and create uplifting patron experiences through design that rival those provided by big firms, restaurants and retail outlets in the city’s central business district.

Creative Community Impact Through Collective Action

In Northeast Detroit, where the majority of nearly 100,000 residents earn roughly \$13,000 annually, Restore NED, a creative community initiative funded by Nortown Community Development Corporation, commissions residents for beautification projects, capitalizing on the neighborhood’s strong social ties through its block clubs, churches and neighborhood organizations.

Northeast Detroit artist Walter Bailey was hired by Restore NED to paint large murals in the park and also teaches art at the local library branch. Northeast Detroit native John Greasy, who teaches music at the same library, composed the score for a 2018 documentary about Detroit. Restore NED leaders Pat Bosch and Karen Washington were featured in the documentary about their neighborhood.

Detroit City of Design initiatives coupled with the collective creative action of Nortown residents are turning the neighborhood into a role model for artistic engagement and development for the city as a whole.

“Inclusive design ensures that a variety of voices are heard,” said Ellie Schneider, director of City of Design, Design Core Detroit. “We’re proud of the convergence of diverse perspectives in our city and the work we’re doing with our partners to create a City of Design that celebrates every Detroiter.”

About Design Core Detroit

Design Core Detroit champions design-driven businesses and their role in strengthening Detroit’s economy. It offers services to strengthen, grow and attract design businesses, increases market demand for design services, and tells Detroit’s design story locally and globally. Design Core is the steward of Detroit’s UNESCO City of Design designation and is a partnership of the College for Creative Studies and Business Leaders for Michigan.