Sasaki Foundation

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Sasaki
Foundation

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Letter from the Executive Director



At the end of June, I stepped away from the role of executive director and celebrated all the meaningful and impactful work that we have accomplished together. Leading the Sasaki Foundation through a new phase of growth these last four years has been a wonderful experience in large part due to the depth of talent and vision at Sasaki. I am grateful for my dedicated Board of Trustees, Sasaki CEO James Miner, and the many Sasaki volunteers who helped make this work a reality. I am also grateful for our dedicated staff team, whose care and wizardry has enabled our success.

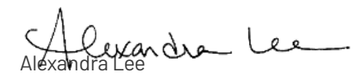
As we lead with research and experimentation, our third cohort of Design Grants research teams wrapped up this summer. Their work is even more impressive given all of it was accomplished through remote and socially distanced means, in light of the ongoing pandemic. Our Design Grants program is an outstanding body of work that continues to grow and flourish. We also have advanced research in mobility equity through the Mobility Innovator and supported expansion of the Density Atlas. You can learn more about all three of our cohorts and our research initiatives on our website. I hope you will take a moment to see what our teams have accomplished.

Through the lens of community learning and engagement, we continued to host virtual events that fostered deep and meaningful conversations on community, feminism, ecology, mobility, and equity. In addition to US attendees, these programs were able to reach a global audience with registrants from Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, South Africa, and the Middle East. Looking further back, during my tenure we launched the Incubator at Sasaki, where we held over 125 programs in partnership with over 160 organizations in Greater Boston. These gatherings have been influential to the Sasaki Foundation's growth and presence in the community, with participation from over 14,000 attendees.

With an eye towards professional practice and growth, some of the most powerful and meaningful work has been spending time with young people curious about exploring a career in design. I will miss the joyful days of middle school students learning about design, and the deeply impactful SEED internship for high school students. Design thinking is a beneficial skill for everyone, regardless of profession. And it is my hope that at least some of our students will continue to explore a future career in design.

From the day we launched the Incubator at Sasaki, the Sasaki Foundation has focused on issues of equity in how our communities are shaped by underwriting community research projects and hosting relevant conversations. In light of the current push for gender equity and a racial reckoning in society, hopefully this work of the Sasaki Foundation will play an important role in creating some solutions to these entrenched challenges.

The Sasaki Foundation is well positioned to grow and I am excited to see what comes next.



Alexandra Lee
Executive Director (2017-2021)

2021 SEED site visit | Sasaki

People

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The Sasaki Ambassadors volunteer their time and effort in all areas of our work.
Our success relies on their commitment to and belief in our mission.

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The Sasaki Foundation would also like to thank our 2021 SEED teaching assistants: Rebecca Dejenie, Emely Fernandez, and Shemar Stewart, and our summer intern through the Wellesley College sponsored internship program, Jocelyn Yu.

Mission Statement



Through research, programs, design education, and partnerships, the Sasaki Foundation takes an interdisciplinary approach to tackling global challenges in our local context of Greater Boston and beyond. The Sasaki Foundation supports inclusive approaches that bridge the physical environment, community and social needs, policies and governance, and economic forces to shape equitable communities.

Bike ride for gender equity in Columbia Road on July 11, 2021 | Columbia Road Gender and Mobility Initiative

Priorities

We believe design has the power to address the most urgent challenges facing us, from social equity to environmental resilience. Design is an agent of change. And yet, access to design—for communities who need it the most—is often limited. From our unique position at the intersection of research, practice, and community, the Sasaki Foundation leverages design to tackle these challenges and more—especially for communities that are disproportionately vulnerable to them.

Making meaningful and lasting change requires designers to blur the boundaries that separate practice and research, academia and industry, the profession and the public. Making change requires designers to embrace vastly different points of view. Above all, making change requires collective impact. At the intersection of research, practice, and community, the Sasaki Foundation is committed to advancing the value of design, inviting diverse partners to co-create change.

The Sasaki Foundation's strategic objectives translate its vision into a more focused, actionable set of outcomes. We focus on the following three key priority areas: Research and Experimentation, Community Learning and Engagement, and Professional Practice and Growth.

Our intent is to test new models and projects that can work within communities and then scale to other communities with similar characteristics. Our research agendas, public programming approaches, and design education objectives are all developed through the lens of equity in design.



The Hideo Sasaki Foundation is named for Hideo Sasaki, an internationally renowned landscape architect who was admired for his teaching, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary approach to design.

2021 SEED site visit | Sasaki

RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

Large-scale, complex challenges require cross-disciplinary thinking. That's why the Sasaki Foundation convenes experts and innovators from all backgrounds. Our research programs focus on bringing issues of inequity in design to the forefront. This means supporting active research projects that center on inclusion and collaboration with communities who have historically been removed from the design process. Advancing interdisciplinary design research is in service to building more equitable cities and communities.

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Informed and engaged residents are the central ingredients of a successful community. The Sasaki Foundation invests in ideas and strategies that engage community members in the design process—and contribute meaningfully to its outcomes. To that end, we work with civic leaders, educators, economists, and technologists to connect design and community-driven action through public programming.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND GROWTH

A thriving design industry relies on a pipeline of diverse, talented, and passionate practitioners who infuse new ideas and disrupt established patterns. The Sasaki Foundation supports professional organizations and initiatives that prepare such future leaders. We also advocate for innovative design practice, seeking ways to cross discipline boundaries and amplify impact. Of special interest are educational programs that advance diversity and inclusivity in the next generation of design professionals.

The Sasaki Foundation emphasizes resiliency, as it relates to challenges that adversely impact communities, including the following:

Proactive Approaches to Climate Adaptation
We support responses to extreme heat, stormwater and flash flooding, and coastal and river flooding. In cities like Boston, climate change issues, especially in environments with the urban heat island effect and flooding, disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities.

New Models for Housing
We support strategies to improve housing affordability, promote a more diverse housing stock, and address gentrification and displacement. Like many cities, Boston's housing shortage requires innovative approaches to planning and design. Displacement of families is exacerbated by the limited supply of affordable, family-oriented housing units.

Innovation in Transit and Access to Mobility Choices
We support design strategies and solutions to address existing challenges to reliable transit; strengthen public-private partnerships in expanding transportation choices; and leverage technology to provide greater access to transportation options by eliminating barriers. Greater Boston's local mobility networks and regional systems have tremendous potential to improve accessibility and safety for users. Methods for leveraging private-sector innovation to increase transportation access for all communities present a powerful opportunity.

Creative Community Building
We support projects and organizations on themes of collective memory and community storytelling, investment in historic neighborhood fabric, and local business development. Designing and planning for our Greater Boston communities can extend beyond the concept of placemaking to include the idea of placekeeping—the preservation of local identity through strengthening social bonds, celebrating neighborhood history, and developing strategies for enhancing neighborhood retail, food, and health services.



community outreach | Rentify Chinatown

IMPACT: Research & Experimentation

The Sasaki Foundation issues an annual call for proposals seeking projects that engage with communities in the Gateway Cities, Metro West, and Greater Boston. Seeking interdisciplinary, creative approaches to test new design concepts in these communities, proposals are evaluated through the lens of our strategic focus areas—Proactive Approaches to Climate Adaptation, New Models for Housing, Innovation in Transit and Access to Mobility Choices, and Creative Community Building—and based on the criteria of design, equity, inclusion, innovation, and impact. Grants include access to design expertise from Sasaki professionals.

The Sasaki Foundation issued the Design Grants 2020 call for proposals under the theme of Shared Futures: Charting a Course for Action. This theme recognizes that multiple futures are at stake, and we can make a difference by acting now and as a collective.

The 2020 Design Grants finalists pitched their ideas to a jury that represented design, transit, housing, and environmental organizations. The Sasaki Foundation selected the following three grant recipients who completed their projects in June 2021.

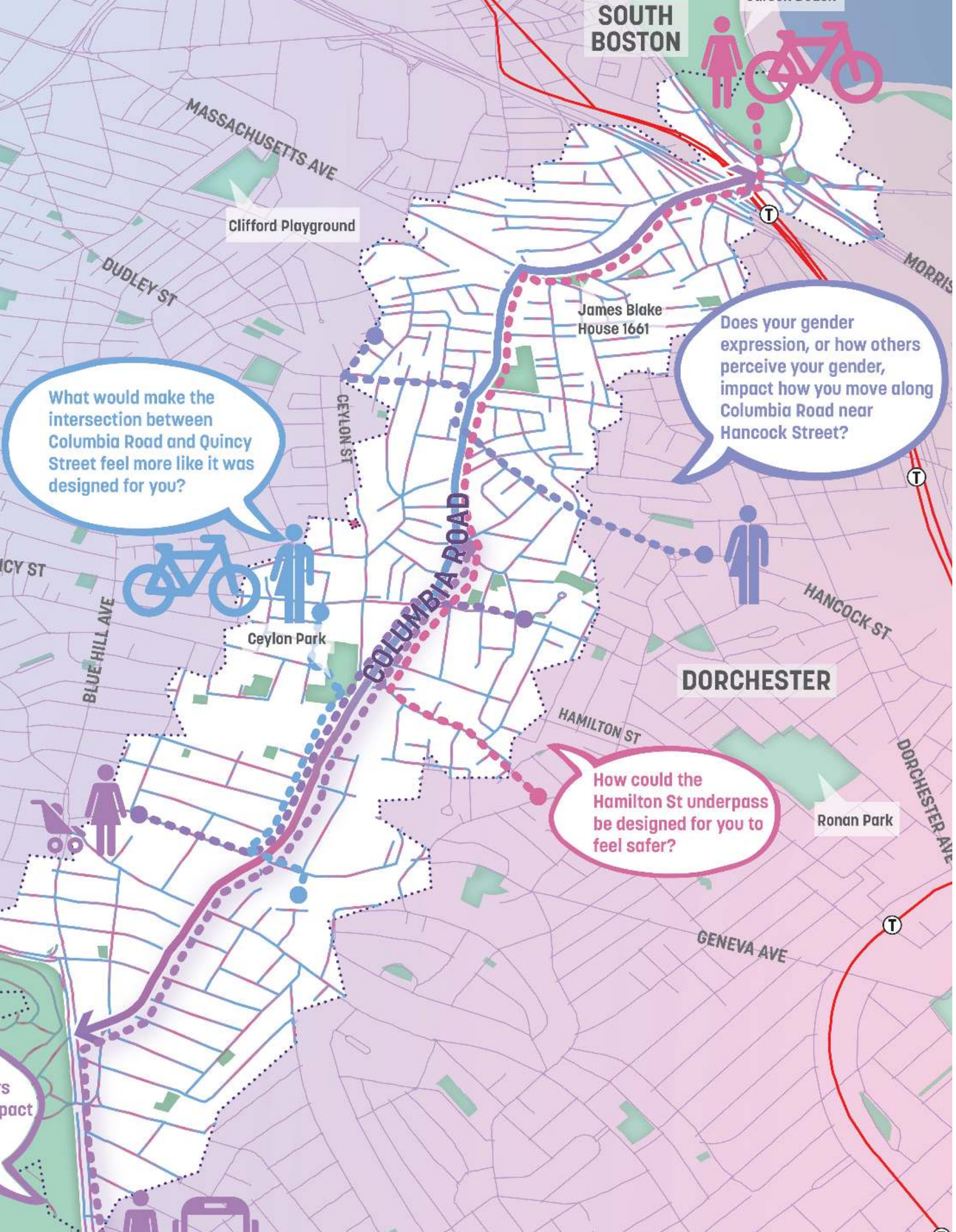
- Columbia Road Gender and Mobility Initiative
- Economic Development in Codman Square
- The Mattapan Mapping Project

Their complete reports are available in the Sasaki Foundation 2020-2021 Design Grants Research publication available at sasakifoundation.org.

NOTE: 2021 has been a transition year for all of us, and in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in addition to our upcoming office move, we postponed our annual call for proposals to 2022. Stay tuned for more information.



Charles River Floating Wetland installation, June 29, 2020 | Sasaki



Columbia Road map graphic | Columbia Road Gender and Mobility Initiative in partnership with Sasaki

2020-2021 DESIGN GRANTS RECIPIENT

The Columbia Road Gender and Mobility Initiative sits at the intersection between research, advocacy, and design. This project sought to understand the mobility limitations that stem from gender inequities and gendered experiences on the streets. The team examined how gender-disaggregated data can reveal mobility and design factors that address female, non-binary, and trans people's needs and experiences.

Columbia Road Gender and Mobility Initiative

Maria de la Luz Lobos Martinez, Ambar Johnson, Kristiana Lachiusa, Denise Roman

The team recognizes that urban planning and design decisions have been made with a (non-existent) neutral person in mind. However, every person's mobility experience is unique.

Composed of advocates, academics, and community leaders, the team wants to create an equitable and welcoming Columbia Road. They understand that people—including all of their multiple identities—need to be at the center of the conversation and that we should all be able to move safely and comfortably throughout our neighborhoods.



Codman Square map | Economic Development in Codman Square in partnership with Sasaki

2020-2021 DESIGN GRANTS RECIPIENT

The Corcoran Center Urban Action Lab developed recommendations over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year as part of an ongoing project, supported by a Sasaki Foundation Design Grant, to strengthen the Codman Square Business District. Students and professors from the Corcoran Center for Real Estate and Urban Action conducted research in several forms to ensure the proposals for economic development considered legitimate neighborhood input and reflected neighborhood data. These methods of study included interviews with local businesses, an anonymous residential survey, a vacancy analysis, a demographic study, and several meetings with local community-based organizations.

Economic Development in Codman Square

Neil McCullagh, Taylor Perkins, Lynn Sanders, Charles Vlahakis

Realizing the strengths and potential opportunities for growth and development, the research team sought to reinforce strengths and build on opportunities that are generated from expressed community interests. With design thinking and emergent strategy at the core of the project, the team co-created a series of prototype recommendations that are representative of ideas that are low cost, implementable across a short time window, and tests of ideas and concepts that can be improved and scaled as practical. Prototypes provide an opportunity to explore what works and what is responsive and acceptable to a given context.

Through prototyping and reinforcing projects that demonstrate incremental success, programs can be implemented. The recommended economic development prototypes center on three core themes: mobilize the business district; encourage homegrown businesses; and give them a reason to stay. These prototypes present a strong foundation for community stakeholders, mobilized by Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (CSNDC) and supported by Boston College, to advance community-led economic development in Codman Square.



2020-2021 DESIGN GRANTS RECIPIENT

The Mattapan Mapping Project is a community-based initiative that collects and shares resident stories alongside quantitative and spatial data about how Mattapan is changing with respect to development, policy and planning, and community organizing. By providing diverse, relevant, and coherent information on a single open-source online platform, the project seeks to empower residents to take civic action and advocate for equitable policy and urban development.

The Mattapan Mapping Project

Allentza Michel, Fatima Ali-Salaam, Barry Fradkin, Laurie Goldman, Cecley Hill, Sasha Hulkower, Kayla Patel, Lily Song

The Mattapan Mapping Tool is a creative and user-friendly online mapping tool designed to track nuanced data—demographic and land use statistics, audio and video files, cognitive maps, alternative housing, and land use typologies—that affirm and amplify the place-knowing and spatial claims and aspirations of community members.

Participatory action research and community capacity building around data gathering, analysis, visualization, and narratives seeks to shift extractive practices of knowledge production and scholarship led by outsiders to democratic modes of knowledge creation and applied learning which are contextual, participatory, and change-oriented.

Participatory planning engages Mattapan community members in using multi-faceted data to inform and educate other residents, neighborhood and civic leaders, organizational and institutional representatives, researchers, planners, designers, policymakers, and city staff about displacement pressures and advocates for equitable development in Mattapan.

Since cultivating community knowledge for influential action is an emergent process, the project proceeds in three iterative phases:

- Community-informed Design: Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council members and other residents informed the initial design of the tools and the prioritization of data collection.
- Community-engaged and Empowering: Residents are collecting and interpreting data to inform community education, planning, and advocacy while mobilizing their neighbors to join the effort.
- Community Ownership: Ultimately, Mattapan residents will co-lead the project to foster ongoing community learning that shapes Mattapan's future while honoring its past and celebrating the present.

Greater Mattapan graphic | The Mattapan Mapping Project in partnership with Sasaki

Charles River Floating Wetland

The Charles River Floating Wetland, a 2018 Design Grants winner, explores an ecological intervention to reduce harmful algal blooms in the Charles, which threaten the river's health and limit the feasibility of swimming. Reducing nutrient pollution remains a vital method for preventing blooms, but this approach depends on increasingly complex solutions. Ecological interventions, like the floating wetland, offer an alternative and complementary strategy. Experiments have shown that for water bodies like the Charles, algal blooms can be understood as a symptom of a broken food chain. The project aims to strengthen the missing link—zooplankton populations—by providing additional wetland habitat.

In June 2020, in partnership with MassDCR, the team installed the floating wetland in the Charles River in Cambridge downriver of the Longfellow Bridge. As of fall 2021, the floating wetland has experienced a year's worth of growth with a significant increase in plant density, and can grow approximately 200 grams of plants per square foot. The team spent summer 2021 collecting data, which they will study in depth over winter 2021 ahead of a second summer of data collection.

In summer 2021, the Charles River Conservancy (CRC) also partnered with the Cambridge Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP). MSYEP students worked closely with the CRC to learn about the floating wetland, share their learned knowledge, and collect community feedback on the project. With significant feedback collected onsite, students formed teams to brainstorm thoughtful and imaginative designs that will inform floating wetland project expansion.

Learn more at thecharles.org/floating-wetlands.



Close up of the Charles River Floating Wetland, October 6, 2021 | Charles River Conservancy

Rentify Chinatown

Rentify Chinatown, a 2019 Design Grants winner, understands Boston's Chinatown is at risk of gentrification and displacement, which exacerbates the loss of identity and memory. In response, Rentify Chinatown aims to leverage the joint power of data analytics, digital tools, and in-depth interviews to document and explain the place-based identity of Chinatown. The team has created a shared database of quantitative and qualitative data for Boston's Chinatown community organizations and offers insights about local identity challenges and opportunities in the neighborhood.

The team also developed WOW Chinatown, a crowdsourcing mapping tool embedded in WeChat—the messaging application widely used among Chinatown residents. In early 2021, the Rentify Chinatown research team, along with Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center and Pao Art Center, introduced this tool to residents and their friends and families, encouraging individuals to identify, post, and share their memories and sentiments about specific locations in Chinatown.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team believes it is extremely urgent to create an outlet for the community to engage and express their opinions online. This tool will also help understand residents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their perception about the changes in Chinatown. The target audience is both Chinatown residents and anyone with an association to Chinatown, including tourists, visitors, shoppers, and people who work in Chinatown.

WOW Chinatown can be searched and launched on the WeChat platform as "Rentify."

G{Code}

G{Code}, a 2018 Design Grants winner, is working towards equity and social justice by providing young female and non-binary people of color interested in pursuing careers in tech with foundational needs such as housing, inclusive communities, quality education, and expanded access to economic opportunity. Boston is a city of great opportunity but also geographic and demographic inequity. This drastically impacts young female and non-binary people of color: while many programs benefit them during their high school years, post-high school options are limited. G{Code} programming empowers those who are aging out of other services to explore their next steps and pursue careers as change makers in the tech industry.

In summer 2021, G{Code} celebrated the graduation of the third Intro to G{Code} cohort. This course is a free 10-week program designed to give female and non-binary people of color between the ages of 18 to 25 first exposure to coding to uncover interest and aptitude in tech in a supportive, inclusive, and safe environment. In this most recent cohort, 70% of graduates have gone on to participate in training and fellowship programs, joining the previous 20+ Intro to G{Code} graduates who have gone on to pursue careers in tech.

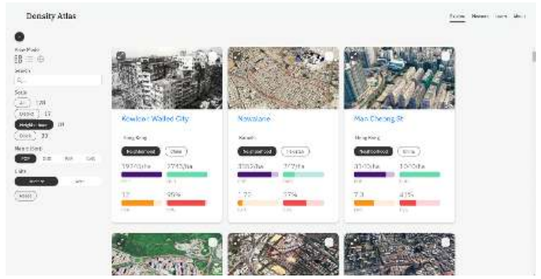


Intro to G{Code} program | G{Code}

G{Code} has also made enormous progress fundraising, most recently with a $450,000 commitment from The Willow Tree Fund to support programming and help fund phase one of the G{Code} House construction. The G{Code} Carriage House will serve as a tech center and media lab for programming and foster connection with the greater community. An IFundWomen crowdfunding campaign that ran through the end of 2021 aimed to close the funding gap for the Carriage House.

Learn more and get involved at thegcodehouse.com.

The Density Atlas provides planners, architects, developers, and students with a resource for comparing urban settlements using a standard metric and scale system.



Neighborhood density comparison using the Density Atlas website

With more than 120 case studies, the Density Atlas shows what density can look like in three distinct scales: district, neighborhood, and block. It allows designers to understand the implications of population, building footprints, and urban design in residential densities across the world, informing decisions regarding our built environment.

The Density Atlas project originated in 2015 with Tunney Lee, who was a professor in the Department of Urban Studies (DUSP) at MIT. He, along with students and alumni, developed the Density Atlas after struggling to define density for specific developments. In their research and search for precedents, they found most studies focused on density at the city and district scales, but few at the neighborhood level. Also, the varying metrics and scales used by each study generally led to ill-informed comparisons and conclusions. In response, the Density Atlas provides standard metrics to view density at three distinct scales.

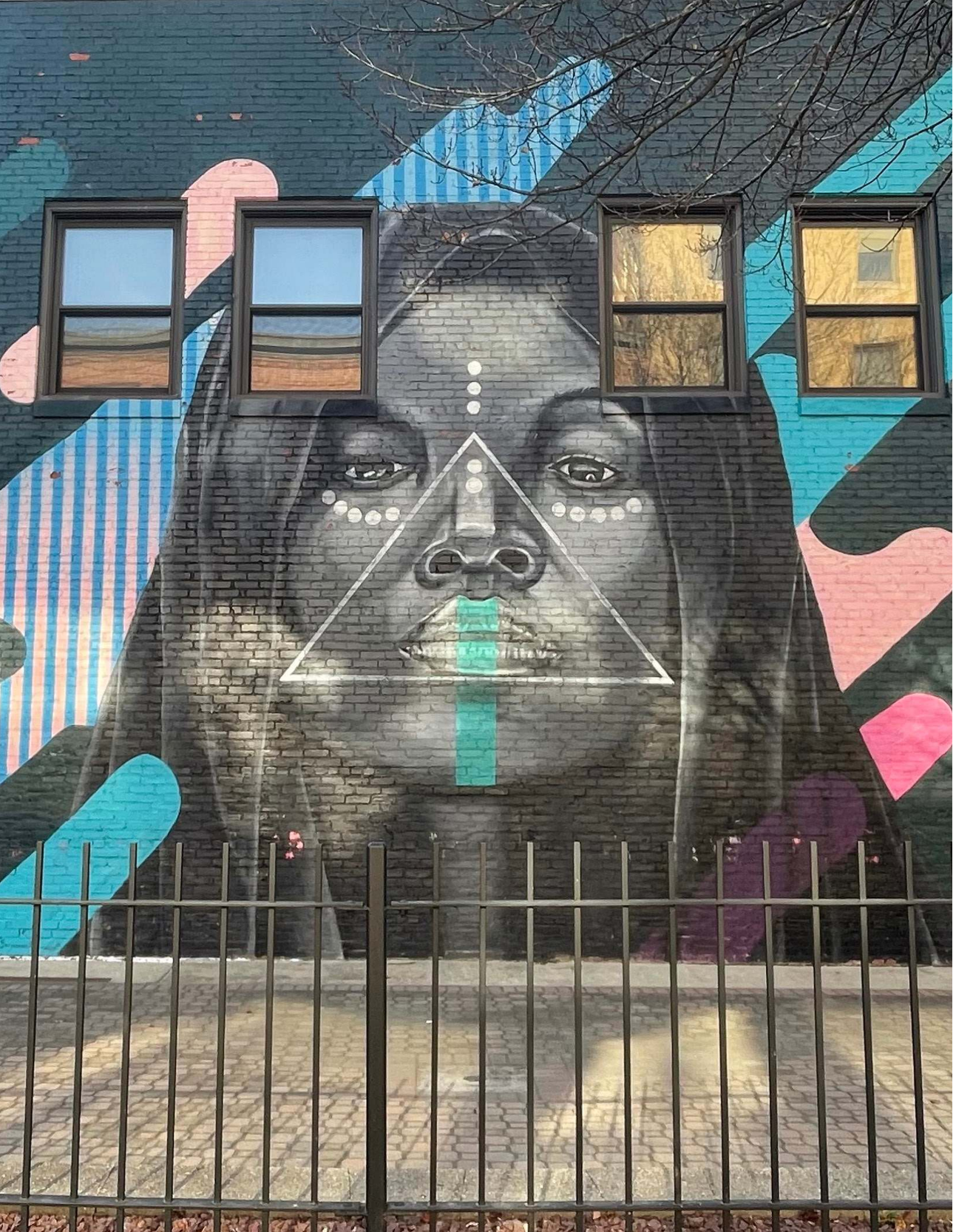
In 2019, the Density Atlas transferred to Sasaki for stewardship. Sasaki's recent work to improve the tool, with support from the Sasaki Foundation, resulted in a fully redesigned website with expanded capabilities for exploring and comparing case studies. Future enhancements will include new visualizations and the ability to crowdsource new cases from within Sasaki.

The new DensityAtlas.org launched in spring 2021.



The Density Atlas is dedicated to Professor Tunney Lee (1931-2020), professor emeritus of urban planning and former head of the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

Eixample, Barcelona, Spain



The Mobility Innovator was a year-long initiative to address mobility challenges in the Boston region through the lenses of resiliency and equity. The project, funded by the Barr Foundation and in partnership with Sasaki, sought to understand how to better connect communities of color and low-income communities to jobs, social networks, daily needs, and amenities by improving and augmenting existing and emerging transportation networks. It explored how to better leverage technology to identify gaps in current mobility options, including bike and pedestrian pattern analysis and public safety of mobility choices. The project also investigated how amenity-oriented development can achieve a higher share of retail, food, service, entertainment, and social trips on foot.

The Mobility Innovator initiative was funded by a generous grant from the Barr Foundation, whose mission is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts. Founded in 1997 and based in Boston, Barr focuses regionally, and selectively engages nationally, in projects in the arts and culture, climate, and education sectors.

The Mobility Innovator initiative was in partnership with Sasaki. For over sixty years, Sasaki has brought together the best of architecture, interior design, planning and urban design, space planning, landscape architecture, and civil engineering to shape the places in which we live. Out of their Boston, Denver, and Shanghai offices they are defining the contours of place and redefining what's possible along the way. Today, they are a diverse practice of over 300 professionals who share a singular passion for creating authentic, equitable, and inspiring places.

Mural by Cedric "Vise" Douglas and Julez Roth in Lynn, Massachusetts | Sasaki

Mobility Equity Symposium and Mobility Vision Day

Due to the impacts of COVID-19, this portion of the Mobility Innovator was delayed into 2021.

For communities both within the urban core and without, transportation plans and investments often reinforce unequal land-use patterns and result in unequal access to economic and social opportunities. While technological advancements are increasingly offering opportunities to address those inequalities, there is a lack of planning, policy, coordination, and, significantly, communication in order to effectively seize them.

To explore these issues of mobility and equity, particularly in Gateway Cities, the Sasaki Foundation partnered with the MIT Mobility Initiative to host two community conversations with academic researchers, community members, and city leaders.

The Mobility Equity Symposium, which took place June 5, 2021, with a focus on the cities of Lynn and Malden, offered an opportunity to hear from community members about particular transportation-related needs they have and challenges they face; to engage with local government actors to better understand opportunities and initiatives in the works; and to workshop methods and ideas to address the identified needs and challenges. The day included two panel discussions on the topics of accessibility.

The first panel included Aaron Clausen, City of Lynn; Whitney Demetrius, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA); Wendell Joseph, Sasaki; and moderator Andres Sevtsuk, MIT; and looked at the wide range of factors that affect accessibility. Public transportation, walking, cycling, and wheelchair access have become a dominant paradigm related to mobility systems and access opportunities. A need exists to create a contextual and community-based system that questions accessibility at different scales and multi-modal access. To ensure accessibility benefits are equitably distributed once put in place, we need to recognize that housing and transportation are inextricably linked. Policies to mitigate displacement are essential, along with a comprehensive and strategic plan to allow for equitable benefits.

The second panel included Steve Winslow, Malden City Council; Jonathon Feinberg, New Lynn Coalition; Barbara Kim, Malden resident; and moderator Jim Aloisi, MIT; and examined the impact of COVID-19 on local transporation needs. The discussion focused on how travel patterns in Lynn and Malden changed during the pandemic, and how that might translate into opportunities for providing a better transit and mobility experience for residents as we reimagine life after the pandemic. This requires focusing on where people live and on what they depend, in order to redirect policies, urban design, and limited financial resources in an equitable and effective manner.

The symposium's overarching objective was to understand the mobility challenges and issues that residents of Lynn and Malden are facing. During the conversation, issues related to accessibility and equity, community engagement, funding, and lack of resources resonated with most participants. As part of the symposium, participants identified key areas for future research, innovation, and action. Some key research areas raised during the event included community engagement, mobility modeling, and funding.

The Mobility Vision Day, which took place November 16, 2021, convened leaders and thinkers representing the public, private, and non-profit sectors from across the globe. It showcased the latest research and innovation in the realm of transportation and catalyzed cross-sector collaboration in setting a research agenda for the future of transportation to help build a system that is more sustainable, equitable, and efficient.

The day notably included an insight briefing on the June Mobility Equity Symposium, presented by Stephen Zoepf, Head of Policy at Ellis & Associates and a Mobility Initiative Fellow. He walked participants through the key messages shared during the symposium's panel discussions and summarized the recommendations for an equity-oriented research agenda as crowd-sourced from the Symposium's participants. The Mobility Vision Day also included a panel discussion entitled Mobility Equity Vision:



Mobility Vision Day, November 16, 2021 | MIT Mobility Initiative

Exploring Universal Basic Mobility, which featured Seleta Reynolds, Los Angeles Department of Transportation; Ben Bear, Spin; Robin Chase, New Urban Mobility Alliance (NUMO); and moderator Annie Hudson, MIT Mobility Initiative. Panelists explored the concept of universal basic mobility, offering best practices and highlighting the importance of access to quality transportation for all.

To watch the panels from the Mobility Vision Day, visit mobilityinitiative.mit.edu/mobility-vision.

For the Mobility Innovator, the Sasaki Foundation built partnerships with the Gateway Cities of Lynn and Malden. Research for the get [t]here website explored mobility challenges in these two cities, engaging the community to identify priorities and foster political action to invest in infrastructure in historically underserved communities. This effort led to further community engagement through the MIT Mobility Equity Symposium and an equity panel at the MIT Mobility Vision Day. The Sasaki Foundation also donated to the Lynn Community Care Fund and the Malden Together Fund, both established by their respective communities and United Way to mobilize resources community members who need assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

get [t]here

The Sasaki Foundation, in partnership with Sasaki, created get [t]here. This website explores the challenges of mobility access in Gateway Cities around Greater Boston, specifically in Lynn and Malden.

Through an interactive survey circulated in fall 2020, get [t]here provided community members an opportunity to express their mobility priorities and observe how projects and policies can support their needs. The team summarized the results of these needs in an online story map that indicates which priorities, projects, and policies could be most impactful to each community. The team then overlaid existing datasets to the online map to highlight potential strategies and opportunities for improving those conditions. We hope this tool can align expressed needs with investment opportunities and muster the political will to equitably invest in mobility infrastructure in communities that have historically lacked, or been denied, quality mobility infrastructure.

Explore the site at visualizations.sasaki.com/get-there.

Transit Access

The Sasaki Foundation partnered with Andres Svetsuk of the City Form Lab at MIT to research commuter rail access in Greater Boston.

The research team compared measured and perceived distances to the nearest station for both pedestrians and bicycles. The research shows how these distances can substantially differ, affected by factors like traffic, grade change, and amenities. The report, *Transit Access: Improving Walking and Biking to Commuter Rail Stations in Greater Boston*, presents four policy options and explores how each scenario could reduce perceived distance, improving access to residents, jobs, and development opportunities in the commuter rail system as a whole.

Explore the interactive map and download the report at boston.transit-access.com.

Central Square Commuter Rail stop in Lynn, Massachusetts | Sasaki

IMPACT: Community Learning & Engagement

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and our upcoming move to downtown Boston, Sasaki Foundation programming remained virtual in 2021. While we look forward to hosting in-person conversations again, we have leveraged our virtual platform to expand our reach, with program attendees from six different continents and select discussions available for on-demand viewing.

Our continued strong partnership with Sasaki, a world-renowned design firm, ensures that a valuable design perspective is present in all our conversations. Sasaki design professionals serve as moderators for our panel discussions, bringing together experts from our extended network of academic, professional, and community partners. Sasaki ambassadors, who volunteer their time and expertise to support our programming, are integral to the Sasaki Foundation's impact.

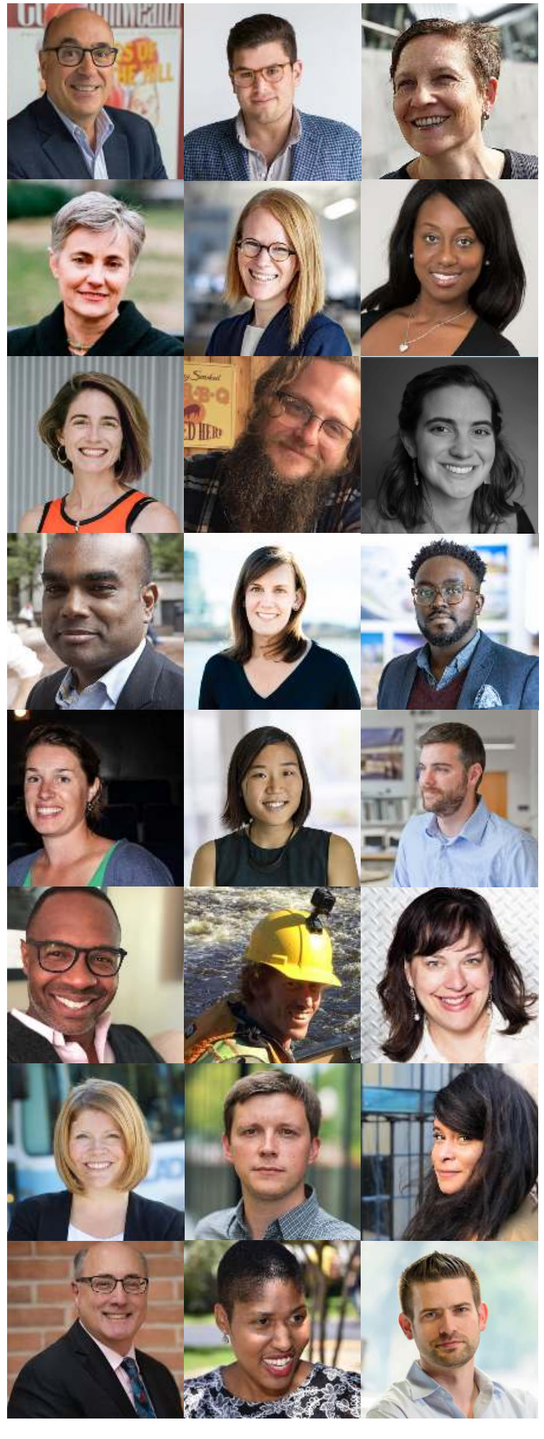
As we move downtown with Sasaki in 2022, this partnership will allow us to continue our mission and explore new possibilities. The central and easily accessible location will provide space to bring together perspectives and communities through our research initiatives, public programming, and design education, allowing both the Sasaki and the Sasaki Foundation to work with our neighbors to co-create change.

600+

VIRTUAL EVENT ATTENDEES

PROGRAM SPEAKERS

Jim Aloisi, MIT
Ben Bear, Spin
Lori Brown, Syracuse University, ArchiteXX
Robin Chase, New Urban Mobility Alliance
Aaron Clausen, City of Lynn (not pictured)
Caitlyn Clauson, Sasaki
Whitney Demetrius, CHAPA
Catherine D'Ignazio, MIT Data + Feminism Lab
Jonathon Feinberg, New Lynn Coalition
Annie Hudson, MIT Mobility Initiative
Nigel Jacob, Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics
Laura Jasinski, Charles River Conservancy
Wendell Joseph, Sasaki
Barbara Kim, Malden resident (not pictured)
Jennifer Lawrence, City of Cambridge
Elaine Limmer, Sasaki
Travis Mazerall, Sasaki
Alex McCray, Philanthropy Massachusetts
Nick Nelson, Inter-Fluve
Kate Reynolds McLeod, MassTLC
Seleta Reynolds, Los Angeles DOT
Andres Sevtsuk, City Form Lab at MIT
Simon Simpson, City of Cambridge (not pictured)
Katlyn Turner, MIT Media Lab
Steve Winslow, Malden City Council
Danielle Wood, MIT Media Lab
Stephen Zoepf, Head of Policy, Ellis & Associates



February 25, 2021

Speaker Series: Staying Connected In A Disconnected World



Almost a year after the COVID-19 pandemic completely disrupted our lives, the Sasaki Foundation hosted a panel discussion exploring the questions raised by the need to transfer so many of our in-person connections to a virtual realm. How do we stay active and healthy, both physically and mentally, while so much of our daily lives occurs behind a screen? How do we maintain social connections while also staying safe? How do we keep moving forward with a positive attitude? The conversation provided well-rounded insight into how we keep the many communities we belong to stronger than ever.

March 25, 2021

Feminist Practices In Design + Data



Historically the design field and data science have been predominantly male-centric, but a notable move towards a feminist practice has taken shape in recent years. In honor of Women's History Month, the Sasaki Foundation hosted a virtual panel to discuss the role of feminism in design and data science. In particular, experts on the panel explored what feminism in practice looks like; how to promote a feminist practice; how feminist practice impacts the design and evaluation of spaces, data science, and data ethics; and its impact on the industry as a whole.

April 22, 2021

Speaker Series: Celebrating Earth Day Along The Charles River



As part of the Cambridge Science Festival and to honor Earth Day, the Sasaki Foundation hosted a virtual panel discussion about the Charles River. The conversation highlighted stewardship of the river, activation of public parks along its banks, and the ecology of the river. Attendees heard an update on the Charles River Floating Wetland and the water quality data that has been collected, a look at ways to enliven the river banks, and how we can all contribute to preserving this special asset.

June 5 + November 16, 2021

Mobility Equity Symposium + Mobility Equity Vision: Exploring Universal Basic Mobility



The MIT Mobility Initiative, in partnership with the Sasaki Foundation and with funding by the Barr Foundation, hosted the Mobility Equity Symposium to explore issues of mobility and equity as they relate to communities in the cities of Lynn and Malden. The symposium was an opportunity to hear from community members, engage with local government actors, and workshop methods and ideas to address identified needs and challenges. The conversation continued at the Mobility Vision Day with an insight briefing on the June event and a panel discussion, Mobility Equity Vision: Exploring Universal Basic Mobility.

IMPACT: Professional Practice & Growth

In summer 2021, the Sasaki Foundation hosted our fourth annual Summer Exploratory Experience in Design (SEED) program. SEED is a six-week paid internship for high school students from the Boston area. With the help of teaching assistants and Sasaki design mentors, the students learn about careers in the design field and develop their own tactical urbanism project.

In 2021, we welcomed seven high school students from neighborhoods across Greater Boston, including Brighton, Charlestown, Dorchester, Mattapan, Somerville, South Boston, and West Roxbury. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we once again conducted the program remotely. In addition to working virtually, students participated in outdoor group site visits and explored their own neighborhoods. Each week, as part of the design coursework, students also had the opportunity to interview a Sasaki principal and were free to ask the leaders anything. SEED student Justin noted, "It was really inspiring to see how all of [the principals] eventually got into design."

Over the six-week internship, our SEED students worked in three small teams to design pop-up cooling spots adjacent to public libraries in the City of Boston. Students began sketching ideas on a site visit to a Cool Spot designed by Sasaki at the Egleston Square Library. The Cool Spots—a partnership with the City of Boston Department of the Environment, Boston Public Libraries, Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, Klimaat, and Landscape Forms—have free Wi-Fi, shaded seating, and misters for the community to use during hot summer months.

The program culminated with each team presenting their final design to their design mentors and Sasaki principals. The first team focused on soundscapes as a main concept. They took the noises of the street and designed a series of structures that would both embrace and mitigate the acoustics on site, brilliantly arranging their program to take advantage of all the various noise levels.

The second team studied the effects of historical redlining on today's heat islands and looked for opportunities in Roxbury to bring cooling structures to those who need them most. The team focused on the communal nature of a beehive for their concept and worked hexagonal shapes into their design in an innovative and inspiring way.

The third team worked on an impressive design focused on biomimicry. They brought the forest of Franklin Park to the site and created a canopy of wooden trees that both supports vegetation and collects rainwater to help cool the users through water and shade.

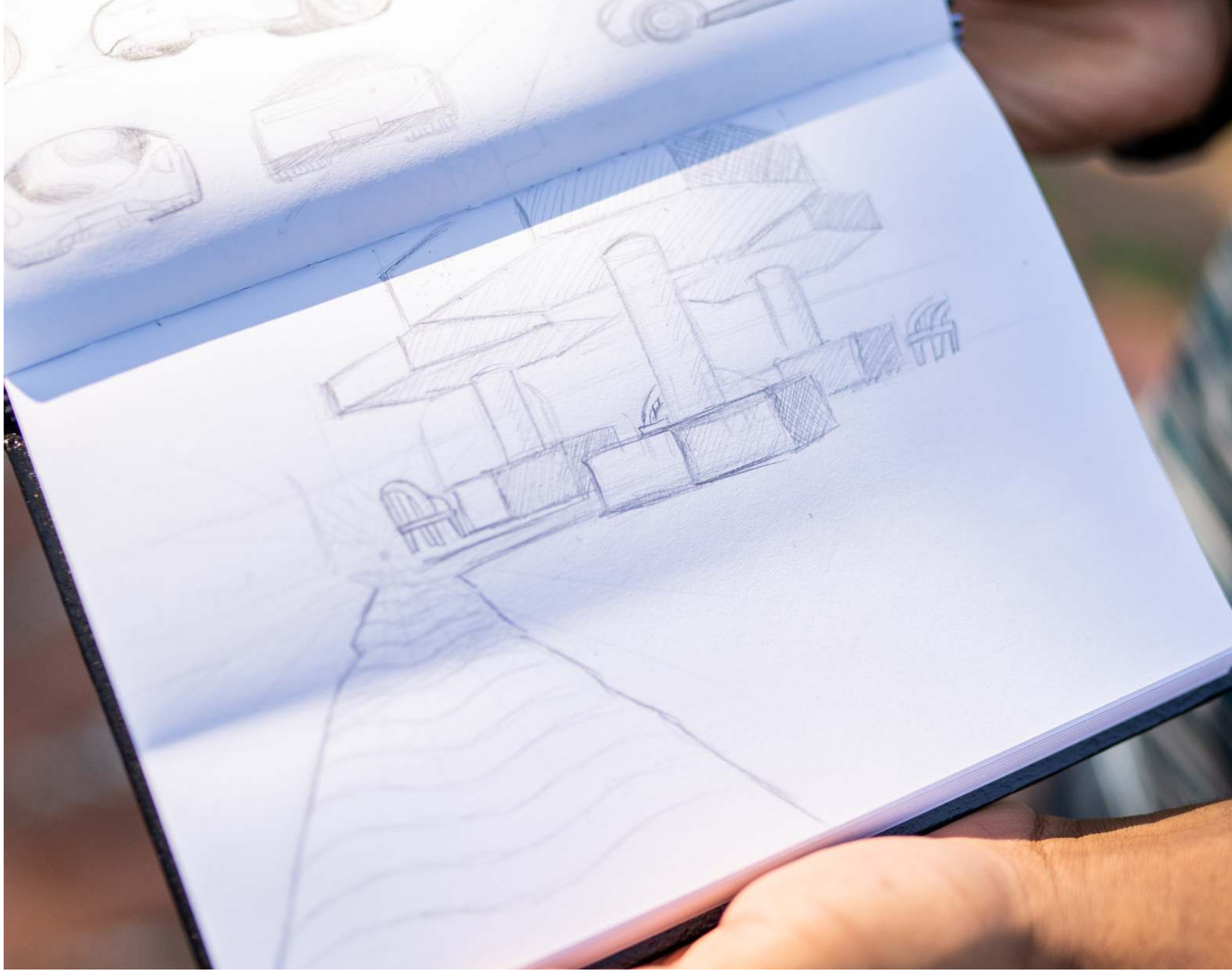
Sasaki architect and SEED coordinator Meredith McCarthy stated, "The students jumped right in and for six weeks worked hard on their designs, presenting them in stunning fashion."

While we all look forward to returning the SEED program to a fully in-person format, the students still came away with

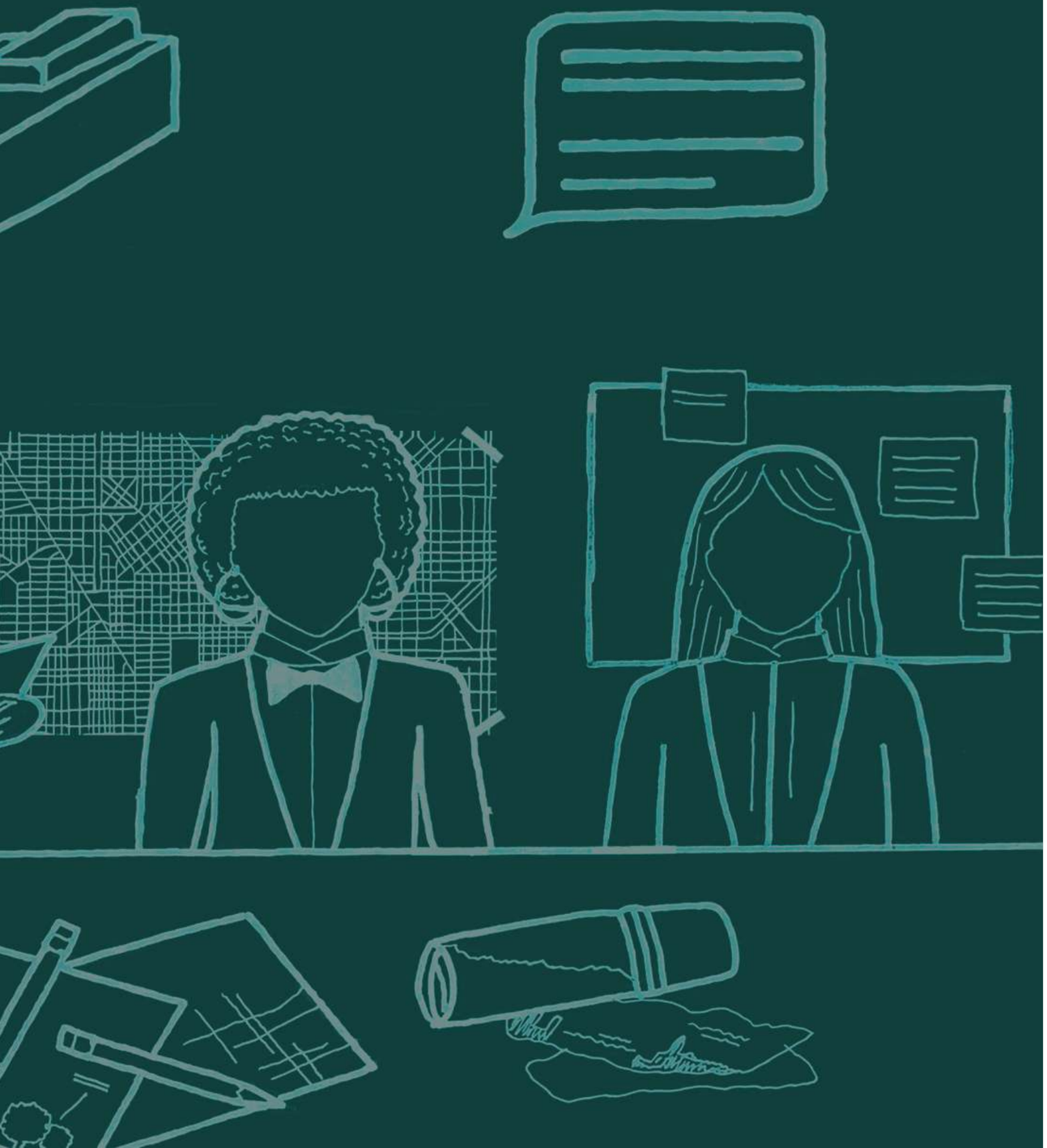
2021 SEED site visit | Sasaki

a meaningful experience and a deeper understanding of the design field and the opportunities it offers. Sophia said the program was “a really helpful experience in deciding how I feel about architecture and design and I am grateful to have been a part of it.” Kiana shared that “after the 6 weeks of non-stop design, exercises, and interviews, I was opened up to a whole new world of design.”

The 2021 SEED program also included a new collaboration with students in Ghana. Sasaki principal Dennis Pieprz, Hon. ASLA, connected the Sasaki Foundation to Kwaku Keddey from Habitance Foundation. Kwaku was inspired by the SEED program and is now coordinating a similar program with youth in Ghana. Sasaki design mentors presented for both groups on various topics, such as site analysis, streetscapes, and materials and site construction. Students from our local SEED program and the Ghana program interacted throughout the summer to share design ideas from their unique perspectives and contexts.



2021 SEED student sketchbook | Sasaki



The Sasaki Foundation continues to offer our SEED online curriculum, based on the 2020 SEED internship program that took place virtually due to COVID-19. This free, self-directed curriculum enables students to explore the fields of architecture, interior design, planning and urban design, and landscape architecture, learning about the questions designers ask and the tools they use. The curriculum also includes interviews with design professionals, and opportunities to practice common design techniques and tools.

The Sasaki Foundation SEED online curriculum was developed in partnership with American Student Assistance. Since launching the curriculum in fall 2020, 36 individuals have started the curriculum. While most of these students are from Greater Boston, we have students from across the country and from 11 countries around the world. The curriculum not only provides students worldwide with an easily accessible introduction to careers in design, but also serves as a local recruiting tool for future SEED students.

Access the online curriculum at sasakifoundation.org/seed-online.

SEED online curriculum graphic | Sasaki

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COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



In 2021, the Sasaki Foundation participated in two Architecture + Design Thinking Bootcamps. These bootcamps adapted Architecture + Design Thinking Day, a one-day introductory career awareness initiative for high school students in the Boston Public Schools, into a four-day virtual experience. Guided by professional designers, local students gained hands-on experience with the design process and design thinking. This encounter with the field of design comes at a critical point in the students' career exploration.

Historically, Architecture + Design Thinking Day, an annual program in partnership with the Boston Society for Architecture, Boston Private Industry Council, and Boston Public Schools, includes an office tour and an overview of design and how designers get motivated to enter the field. This is followed by a real design exercise, a student presentation of their designs, and one-on-one interviews with professional designers to learn more about a career in design. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program adapted into a four-day virtual experience that took place during school vacation weeks. A total of 40 high school students participated across the February and April sessions.

Each day, students spent time with designers from different design firms—Sasaki, Goody Clancy, Finegold Alexander Architects, and HMFM Architects—to familiarize themselves with design thinking, visual representations, and material exploration. Over the course of the week, students designed their ideal learning environment through hands-on activities like drawing exercises, case studies, and model building. Designers also fostered conversations discussing their own careers and experiences in the design field. Upon completion, students gained new perspectives and exposure into the various career pathways that exist in the design industry. The program also serves as a pipeline into the Sasaki Foundation SEED internship program, allowing students to continue their design education.

In 2021, the 40 Architecture + Design Thinking Bootcamp students came from six different high schools in the Boston Public School system: Boston Arts Academy, Boston Green Academy, Charlestown High School, East Boston High School, English High School, and the Muriel Sutherland Snowden International School at Copley.

Architecture + Design Thinking Day 2019 | Sasaki

Support

Thank you to our donors, industry partners, and sponsors who have joined us in our efforts to advance the value of design and co-create change to shape the built environment. Your support continues to help us fund grants, sponsor programming, and explore innovations in the design field.

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The Sasaki Foundation thrives because of our 75+ partnerships with academia, industry and civic leaders, community organizations, and other nonprofits. The value of these relationships is made visible through our programming, events, and perhaps most importantly, through the co-creation of positive change in the communities in which we work.

A Look Ahead



Although 2021 was a year of remote work and staff transitions, at the Sasaki Foundation we continued our impact through active community-based research, public programming, and design education. We are thankful for Alexandra Lee's impressive work as our inaugural executive director, and are looking forward to the next chapter with our new executive director, Jennifer Lawrence, and in our new home downtown, as we work to serve the communities of Boston and beyond.

After a search process that yielded more than 130 candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, the Sasaki Foundation was thrilled to name Jennifer Lawrence, formerly of the City of Cambridge, as our new executive director. She will guide the Sasaki Foundation in pursuit of our vision: a future in which the power of community-based planning and design is fully realized for the benefit of the public good.

Jen brings a strong background in planning and design and community engagement, along with experience in both the civic and nonprofit sectors. In Jen's own words, "I strongly believe that the power of design is, in fact, within all of us. This belief is the reason why I do the work that I do. My passion is to ensure all people feel they have a voice in their community. I hope to create meaningful experiences—specifically for those who have been excluded from participation—that empower action, create just communities, and foster the next generation of leaders."

We anticipate issuing our annual Design Grants call for proposals in early 2022. Our most recent Design Grants cohort continues to confront displacement in Mattapan, explore mobility challenges along Columbia Road, and support local businesses in Codman Square. The ongoing work of many of our Design Grants alumni teams extends their community impact well beyond the conclusion of their grants, and we are excited to see what new exciting research we find through our next call.

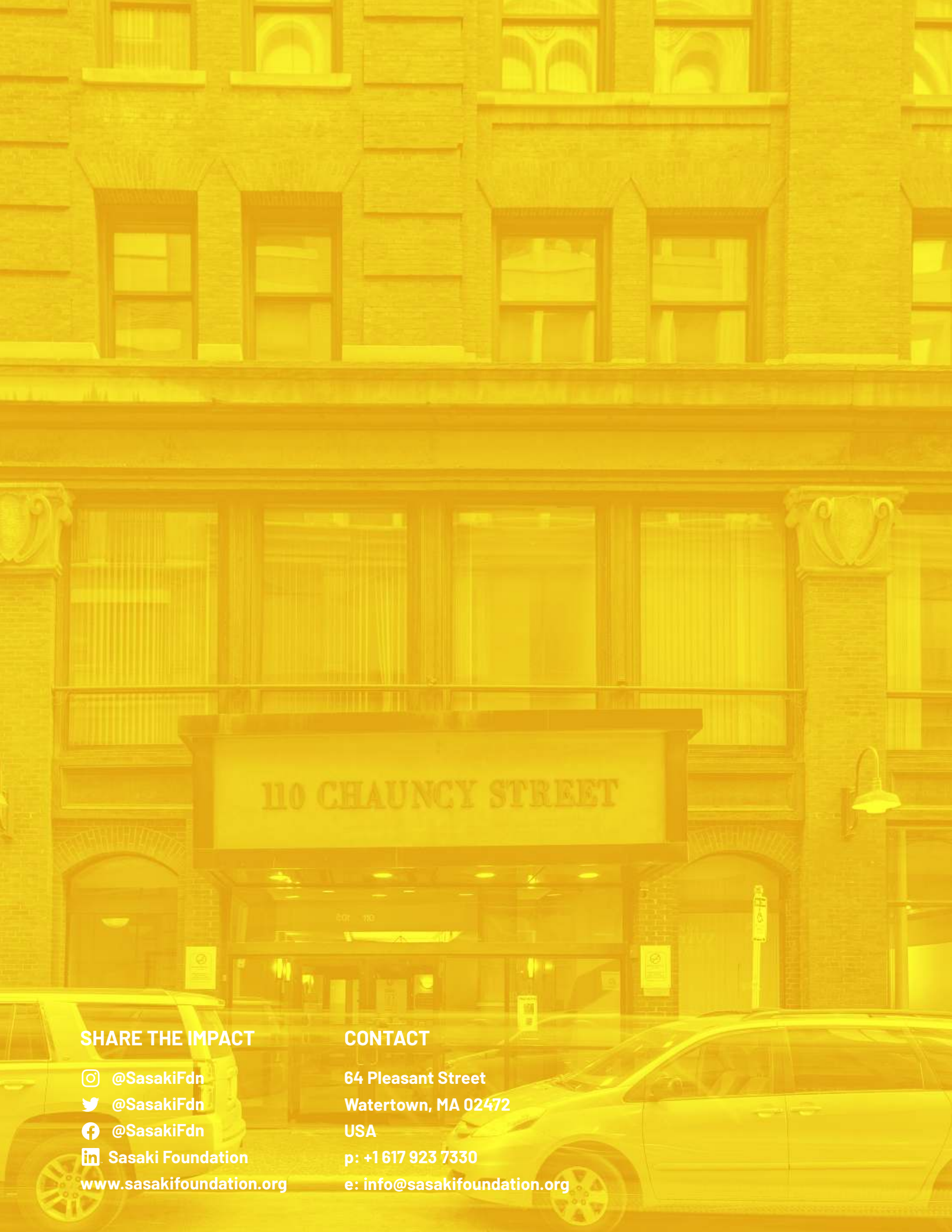
We also look forward to fostering important conversations on equity and resilience, both virtually and in person. Our new downtown location will also offer new opportunities to build partnerships and expand our reach through our design education programs, empowering the next generation through design thinking.

As the Sasaki Foundation moves into a new season, we continue to set ambitious goals and generate a meaningful agenda of research, programs, and partnerships that grow our impact in communities throughout Greater Boston. We hope you will join us as we continue this important work.



Mary Anne Ocampo
Board of Trustees Chair

110 Chauncy, future home of Sasaki and the Sasaki Foundation | Sasaki



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