Sasaki Foundation

2018-2019 DESIGN GRANTS RESEARCH



Sasaki
Foundation

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Introduction



The Sasaki Foundation is named after Hideo Sasaki, a pioneer of modern design, a landscape architect, a leader, and an educator who articulated—and proved—the value of interdisciplinary design while breaking down the traditional barriers between practice and teaching.

The Sasaki Foundation was established with a bequest from Hideo's family and friends to continue his legacy of advancing rigorous and challenging research in design. 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 Foundation builds its values on over six decades of work by Hideo Sasaki, with a current focus on the following priority areas.

Research & Experimentation

Large-scale, complex challenges require cross-disciplinary thinking. That's why the Sasaki Foundation convenes experts and innovators from all backgrounds. The Foundation's research and programs are focused on bringing issues of inequity in design to the forefront. In many cases, this means a focus on helping communities of color and low-income communities, who have historically been removed from the design process.

Community Learning & 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, the Foundation works with civic leaders, educators, economists, and technologists to connect design and community-driven action.

Professional Practice & 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. The Foundation also advocates for innovative design practice, seeking ways to cross discipline boundaries and amplify impact. Of special interest are programs that advance diversity and inclusivity in the next generation of design professionals.

Since its founding in 2000, the Sasaki Foundation has awarded $432,800 for those interested in pursuing focused research initiatives that foster diversity and equity in the design field and that connect young people to mentorship and resources.



◂ *2018 Design Grants cohort working in the Incubator at Sasaki | Sasaki*

Grants Process

In 2018, The Sasaki Foundation launched a call for proposals for our inaugural Design Grants. We received more than 100 inquiries and approximately two dozen team submissions. Finalists pitched their ideas to win grant money and coworking space in the Incubator at Sasaki. The five winning teams, representing 15 organizations, spent nine months in the Incubator working on projects that promote equity in design.

THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Resilient communities are strong communities.

Unfortunately, some communities—especially those that are primarily people of color or historically low-income—are disproportionately impacted by environmental, economic, and social challenges. And yet, when we design the built environment to address these challenges, the voices of the residents are often left out of the process.

The Foundation is focused on issues of resiliency—proactive approaches to climate adaptation, housing, transit, and placekeeping. While these issues are felt throughout the world, we find many impacted communities right here in Massachusetts. We issued a call for proposals to find projects we could support that engaged communities in the Gateway Cities, Metro West, and Greater Boston.

Proactive Approaches to Climate Adaptation

> Responses to extreme heat, stormwater and flash flooding, and coastal and river flooding

In cities like Boston, these issues, especially the urban heat island effect and flood risk, disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities.

- How can investments in climate resilience do more to meet the environmental and social resilience needs of Greater Boston's neighborhoods?
- How can we increase local awareness of resiliency, and inform systems-level approaches to climate risks and solutions?
- How can we model best practices for reducing carbon emissions, increasing building energy efficiency, and improving urban stormwater management?

New Models for Housing

> Strategies to improve housing affordability, promote a more diverse housing stock, and address gentrification and displacement

Displacement of families, caused by economic and environmental forces, is exacerbated by the limited supply of affordable, family-oriented housing units.

- How can we improve public health through new housing and community designs?
- How can design be used to help keep people in their homes and communities (e.g., community land trusts, zoning, accessory dwelling units, re-parcellation of land)?
- What are opportunities to incorporate resilience strategies for buildings or education for residents into building retrofits or new construction?



▲ *2018 Design Grants Pitch Night | Sasaki*

Innovation in Transit and Access to Mobility Choices

> Developing design strategies and solutions for existing challenges to reliable transit; strengthening public-private partnerships in expanding transportation choices and leveraging technology to provide greater access to transportation options by eliminating barriers

Urban reinvestment in transportation in an era when people are attracted to transit-accessible, walkable, and bikeable places can contribute to the rate of displacement among communities of color and low income communities. Meanwhile, the proximity to reliable and affordable transportation choices is key to income mobility and increased access to jobs, education, and social networks. We seek methods for leveraging private-sector innovation to increase access to transportation services for all communities.

- How can we better connect communities of color and low income communities to transportation networks (car/ride/bike-share, bicycle lanes, rapid transit lines, on-demand transport, water transportation)?
- How can your community better access technology to improve mobility?
- How can new transportation solutions help create resilient communities?

Creative Community Building

> Themes of collective memory and community storytelling, historic preservation, and local business development

Our interests extend beyond the concept of place-making to include the idea of place-keeping—the preservation of local identity through strengthening social bonds; celebrating neighborhood history; and developing strategies for enhancing neighborhood retail, food, and health services.

- How do we maintain authenticity while reinvigorating the social and economic well-being of a given community?
- What are creative opportunities for adaptive reuse of buildings or vacant lots to enrich communities?
- How can we build local capacity for economic development and promote local entrepreneurship?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Design

We want to pursue interdisciplinary thinking and challenge the status quo. We sought design ideas that would do something for the community, not just think about it. Winning teams had actionable ideas, and proposals were judged on both their creativity and their feasibility. Proposals also addressed resiliency and equity through the lens of the four topic areas—climate adaptation, housing, transit and mobility choices, and community building.

Equity

We sought proposals that benefitted historically underrepresented communities through strategies aimed at eliminating systematic obstacles. Winning teams showed how their projects would meet the unique needs of a community through a high level of collaboration with community representatives.

Inclusion

We value a variety of voices and seek to address inequities related to identity. We especially encouraged proposals from women; transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming individuals; members of racial or ethnic minorities; and individuals with physical and/or intellectual disabilities.

Innovation

Proposals were judged on their innovation, creativity, and multidisciplinary approach. Special attention was given to teams that proposed forward-thinking, rather than reactive, concepts and ideas.

Impact

Proposals were evaluated based on their potential for impact within the communities they were looking to serve. Winning projects exhibited scalability or replicability across other communities with similar characteristics.

2018 Design Grants Pitch Night | Sasaki ▶

PITCH NIGHT

On September 26, 2018, Sasaki Foundation Design Grants finalists pitched their ideas for projects that address proactive approaches to climate adaptation, new models for housing, innovation in transit and access to mobility choices, and creative community building. More than 150 industry leaders who were in attendance learned how the teams planned to leverage design to address issues of resiliency and equity.

The event was an opportunity to network with startups, designers and planners, community groups, artists, civic leaders, and entrepreneurs who are interested in exploring collaborative ways to strengthen and empower communities.

> "We had a great team of judges, culled from organizations like Harvard, MIT, Ad Hoc Industries, and Sasaki, who evaluated the teams on how equitable and impactful teams' ideas were," said Laura Marett, Design Grants Jury Chair and Secretary of the Sasaki Foundation's Board of Trustees.

Both jurors and members from the Sasaki Foundation Advisory Council participated in the review process of teams' proposals and pitches.



2018 Design Grants Pitch Night audience, including members of the Sasaki Foundation Advisory Council | Sasaki

2018 PITCH NIGHT JURY



Laura Marett | Sasaki (Jury Chair)

Laura Marett is a landscape architect and associate principal at Sasaki and serves as secretary of the Sasaki Foundation's Board of Trustees. Her practice includes landscape design and systems planning for cities and campuses, with an emphasis on resiliency. She has particular interest in the design of vibrant urban public spaces through an engaged public process and resilience planning for vulnerable communities.



Eran Ben-Joseph | MIT

Professor Eran Ben-Joseph is the head of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His research and teaching areas include urban and physical design, standards and regulations, sustainable site planning technologies, and urban retrofitting. Eran previously worked as a city planner, urban designer, and landscape architect.



Diana Fernandez | Sasaki

Diana Fernandez is a landscape architect and associate at Sasaki. Diana is a proven thinker, collaborator, and leader, who teams effortlessly with architects, planners, urban designers, ecologists, and civil engineers on the design of equitable and sustainable places. Her experience spans a broad range of projects from planning to built work.



Adrian Gill | Ad Hoc Industries

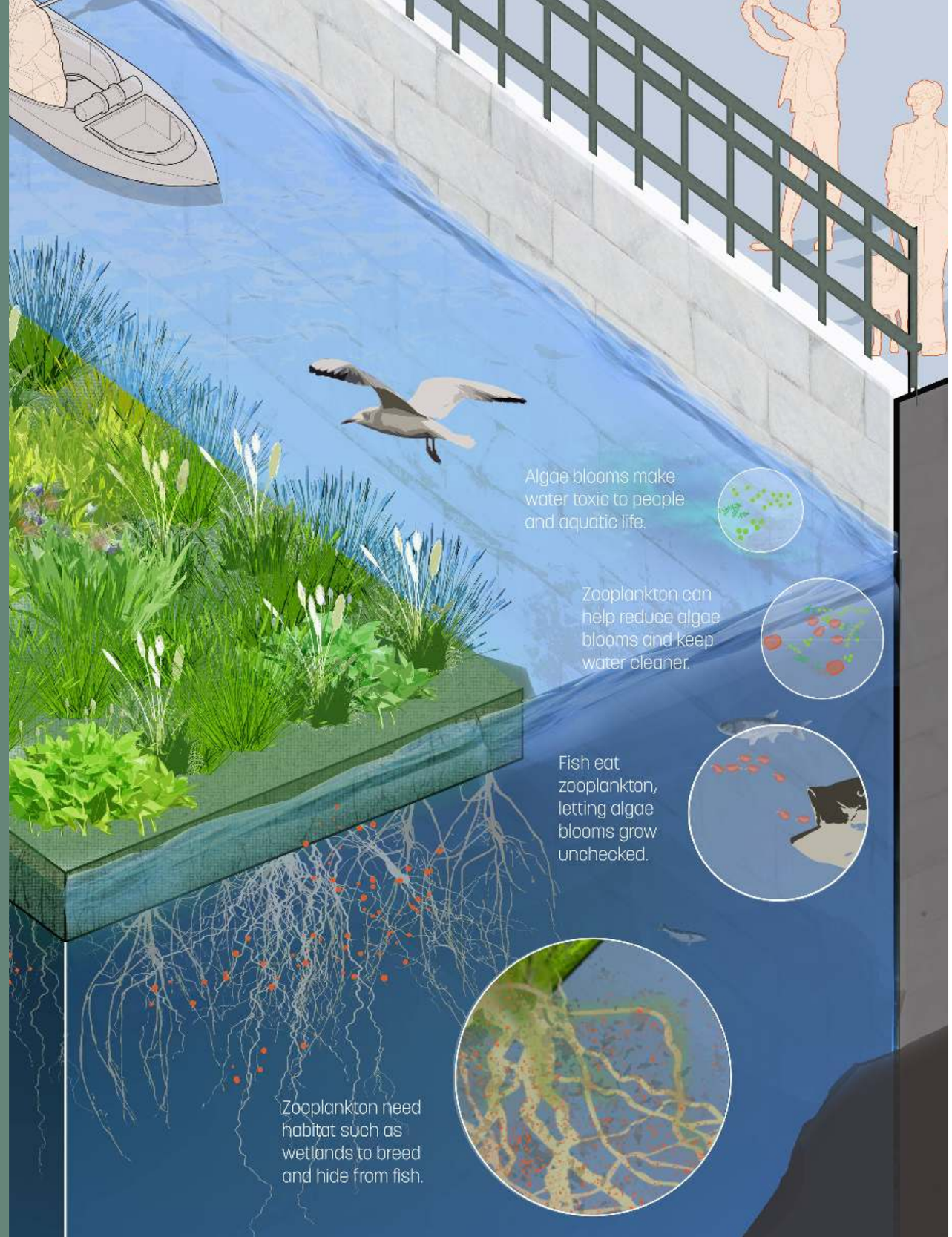
Adrian Gill is the founder of Ad Hoc Industries. Adrian specializes in building creative brands. He has extensive knowledge on building strong brand connection with consumers, and integrating ambitious business goals with bold design objectives. He currently serves as board advisor to a number of internet/mobile startups on creating consumer and brand equity in the social and digital media space.



Stephen Gray | Harvard University

Stephen Gray is an assistant professor of urban design at Harvard Graduate School of Design. His interests center on understanding political and cultural contexts of urban design, socio-ecological urban design approaches to resilience, and the intersectionality of humanitarian aid and urban design. Current projects include the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative, and process design with Syrian refugees for child-focused spaces.

Research Teams



Charles River Floating Wetland

Max Rome, Vanessa Nason, Penelope Taylor, Laura Jasinski

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By installing a floating wetland on the Charles River, the team plans to create a visually impactful statement about missing habitat, to engage the public in an important conversation about the relationship between ecology, pollution, and water quality, and to conduct unique research that can be used to design and size future installations in order to curb harmful algal blooms through increased herbivorous control.

The Charles River Floating Wetland, an initiative of the Charles River Conservancy (CRC), will be the first project of its kind in Greater Boston. An important aspect of this project is the role that it will play in informing future work by serving as a case study for designers and river advocates and as a point of reference for regulators unfamiliar with a project that does not fit easily within the typical permit process.

The floating wetland island will be assembled from self-buoyant modules, which will be roughly 57 feet by 19 feet when assembled and will be anchored to the bottom of the river. The island will be planted with a variety of native wetland plants. Those plants will grow through the matrix, their roots reaching into the water to serve as additional habitat for microscopic zooplankton. A research program will examine whether the additional habitat has a meaningful impact on zooplankton species distribution and size. Because zooplankton can be efficient grazers of cyanobacteria, supporting their population could provide another tool for controlling harmful algal blooms.

On a fundamental level, the health of the Charles River is an issue of equity. As recently as the 1950s, the banks of the Charles River were a public space where, during the hottest days of the summer, families of all incomes and backgrounds gathered to swim and cool down. The hope is that this project will contribute to the restoration of the Charles River and that this installation will help visitors to imagine a future in which plantings and restored ecology lead the way to a river that is healthy, safe, and swimmable.

◂ *Floating wetland concept graphic | Charles River Floating Wetland in partnership with Sasaki*



▲ *At the Kendall Square Challenge, a CRC staff member explains the ecological concepts behind the floating wetland | Flavio D. Photography*

COMMUNITY

The community for this project is broad and diverse. Engagement, one of the project's main goals, has occurred from the beginning, looking to reach different segments of that community.

One group is composed of state agencies with missions that oversee and influence the Charles River, including the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

A second group is other river advocates, whom the team connected with through meetings and panels to share the project and gather insights.

The third and most important community is the public. This project aims not only to study and improve an important public resource—the Charles—but also to educate about and engage around it.

Through many engagement opportunities, the team has discussed this project with each group, including the reasons for it, and what the team will study. Installation will serve to deepen and further this work with the community.

STAKEHOLDERS

The project involved the following stakeholders.

- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, a regulatory agency interested in the health of the river
- Cambridge Conservation Commission, the regulatory agency that oversees the Wetlands Protection Act
- Boston Conservation Commission, which may see similar project applications in the future
- Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, which owns the project site and provides access and permission for construction, installation, and research
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health, which issues water-quality related public health advisories that may be informed by research conducted as a part of this project
- Design community, to promote placemaking and interesting design
- Watershed community, with a strong interest both in river health and potential interventions
- Potential program partners that provide educational services and community engagement, which include, among others, the Museum of Science, Cambridge Public Schools, CitySprouts, and Boston Duck Tours

ANALYSIS

48

days each year recreational activity is restricted by algal blooms

OUTREACH

7

events for public outreach and engagement

DESIGN

800

wetland plants selected for the island

ECOLOGY

20+

native species represented on the island



▲ *Team member Laura Jasinski speaks at the Sasaki Foundation Speaker Series: Resilience Through Climate Adaptation and Water Management, part of the Cambridge Science Festival, April 2019 | Sasaki*

IMPACT

During the design and permitting process, the team engaged numerous state agencies to have meaningful discussions about improving the health of the river. Navigating the permitting process will ultimately lead to the installation and realization of the goals for the wetland. The expectation is that it will also pave a path for other novel ecological interventions, thus providing an even broader impact.

Engagement opportunities encompass both a short- and long-term range. Through the Cambridge Science Festival, the team reached two different audiences: designers who attended a water panel at the Incubator at Sasaki one evening, and those who attended a family-friendly STEAM event on a weekend. The team developed an ecological tag game for participants of the Kendall Square Challenge, which can be adapted to other venues like school groups. At the Climate Action Extravaganza area of the Cambridge River Arts Festival, the team developed and utilized a card game to demonstrate habitat and food chain concepts. These events have provided great conversations, which will inform future lessons and communications, and will also be enhanced through the physical example of the wetland once installed.

Overarching all of this is the long-term ecological goal on the health of the river itself through research. While this installation will not solve the river's challenges, it will provide valuable information that can aid the team and others in implementing solutions.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The broad segments of communities encompass state agencies, water and river groups, and the public. Because a central component of the project has been engagement and meetings, each of these groups has had the opportunity to learn about the project's impacts.

The team met with numerous state agencies and will continue to do so through the remainder of



◀ *CRC staff demonstrate the river food chain through a card game at the Cambridge Arts River Festival, June 2019 | CRC*

▼ *Participants at the Kendall Square Challenge play an ecological tag game with CRC staff, May 2019 | Flavio D. Photography*



permitting, once the wetland is installed, and when there is research to share. The team intends to continue the dialogue with other river groups to share lessons from permitting the floating wetland, as well as the data gathered once it is in place.

Finally, the team is grateful for the opportunities it has had to engage the public on the project, but recognizes there are many more people to reach. The team looks forward to learning from those experiences and expanding their reach.

PROJECT VISIBILITY

As of June 2019, the project is visible through public presentations, stakeholder meetings, and public permit submissions and hearings. The CRC has featured the project in a number of its e-newsletters, social media posts, and on its website. A website dedicated to the floating wetland, developed during the grant cycle, provides more detailed information on the project and water quality issues in the Charles (www.charlesfloatingwetland.com).

Once installed, the project will be more physically visible to the community. Part of what makes this project so exciting is the opportunity to demonstrate the ecological concepts through placemaking. Not only will the island be visible from adjacent North Point Park, but also from the surrounding buildings, the Green Line Lechmere Viaduct, and from kayaks and Duck Tours (with whom the team met so they are aware and can point it out). Planned signage will inform observers on what the floating island is and will direct them to more information.

COMMUNITY MILESTONES

Because the project's community shares a desire for the Charles to be a healthy ecosystem, the planning, permitting, and engagement that has taken place to date has already supported similar ideas that agencies and other environmental non-profits would like to see.

Once installed the Charles River Floating Wetland will be a reference project for others in the region. This was something the team had not considered when beginning the project but was really highlighted

in many of the meetings with regulators. Floating wetlands are a tool that many have heard of and have curiosity about, but local examples and well-documented case studies are lacking. In meetings with local agencies, the team learned about previous interest in installing floating wetlands to aid in protecting reservoirs from roadway runoff. The team heard from local watershed groups who are interested in these types of projects, and for whom the floating wetland hopefully can provide a road map for similar new interventions.

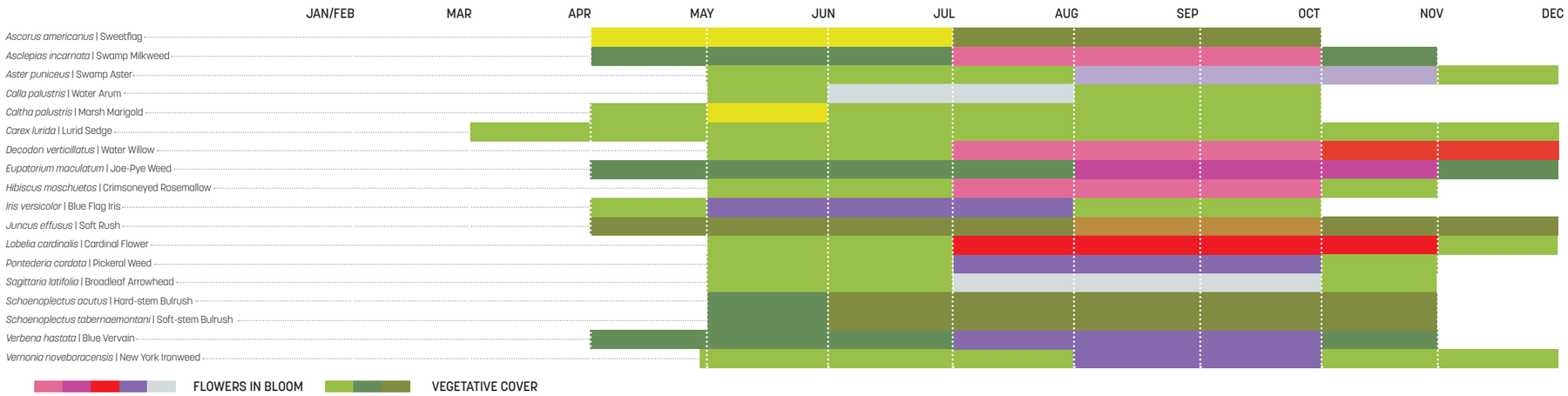
ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOUNDATION

The Sasaki Foundation positions itself at "the intersection of research, practice, and community." Once installed, the floating wetland will be a living exemplar of these three elements. This project is unique because of the way that science, design, and public education are all wrapped up together. Each element supports the others and contributes to the success of the whole. In keeping with the mission of the Sasaki Foundation, this is a public project that will enable any park visitor to learn more deeply about the challenges facing the river. At the same time, the project may be recruiting a new generation of advocates who understand the role that restored ecology has to play in safeguarding the health of the river.

The team's hope is that this project will start many conversations about what is next, what it would mean to take these ideas to scale, and how similar ideas and bold interventions might be applied across the Boston area to help make our cities more livable and more resilient in the face of changing climate. These are conversations that have been elevated through the work of the Sasaki Foundation.

PLANTING STRATEGY

GOALS for plant selection include (a) maximizing roots for habitat, (b) creating a visually captivating design, and (c) selecting varieties appropriate for the growing conditions.




Asclepias incarnata


Aster puniceus


Calla palustris


Caltha palustris


Carex lurida


Decodon verticillatus


Eupatorium maculatum


Hibiscus moschuetos


Juncus effusus


Lobelia cardinalis


Pontederia cordata


Sagittaria latifolia


Schoenoplectus acutus


Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani


Verbena hastata


Vernonia noveboracensis

Planting strategy | Charles River Floating Wetland in partnership with Sasaki

NEXT STEPS

The team's time in the Incubator at Sasaki coincided with design, fundraising, and permitting. While a major milestone was achieved during the hearing with the Cambridge Conservation Commission, there are a few permits and agreements to be obtained before installation. The team is continuing to make progress to install the island in spring 2020. A community event is anticipated to allow the public to see the island product up close, learn about native wetland plants, and help plant the floating wetland matrix before installation.

Planned signage will be visible to the public from North Point Park. Visitors who want more information can visit the website and attend events and talks describing the purpose of the installation and the ecology of the river. The team hopes to expand programming each year. The project team has met with curriculum developers and will explore opportunities to engage school groups around the floating wetland.

Sampling on the river has already begun and once the island is installed, researchers will measure changes in zooplankton abundance, species composition, and mean body size. The team will take baseline data in summer 2019, which will be supported by two more years of data collection in 2020 and 2021. Each year the team will share information learned from both the logistics of installation and from ongoing research in a meeting with the Cambridge and Boston Conservation Commissions. These reports will be made public and accessible through the project website.



▲ *Charles River Floating Wetland design charrette in the Incubator at Sasaki | Sasaki*

SPONSOR ORGANIZATION

Established in 2000, the Charles River Conservancy (CRC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the renewal and active use of the Charles River parks from Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam.

The Conservancy works in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the managing agency of the parks and parkways, as well as the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the managing agency of the historic bridges that traverse the Charles.

Each year, the CRC works with approximately 2,000 volunteers to renew and maintain the Charles River parks. The Conservancy also collaborates with other organizations and coalitions to advocate for increased state funding to enhance the landscape, structures, paths, and amenities of the Charles River Basin.

A leader in forming public-private partnerships, the Conservancy has successfully leveraged funds for many projects that make the parks more active, attractive, and accessible for all. This includes building the popular Lynch Family Skatepark, organizing volunteer park maintenance events, hosting community river swims, and working to build a Charles River Swim Park.

STAY CONNECTED

www.charlesfloatingwetland.com

www.thecharles.org

CharlesRiverConservancy

@charlesrivercrc

@CharlesRiverCRC

RESEARCH TEAM



Max Rome

Max Rome is a PhD candidate in environmental engineering at Northeastern University. For two summers, Max conducted daily water quality testing at North Point Park sponsored by the Charles River Conservancy. His research focuses on harmful algal blooms and understanding the role that increased trophic interaction can play in curbing eutrophication.



Vanessa Nason

Vanessa Nason is the Charles River Conservancy's Project Manager, focusing on operations of the organization and shepherding its river swimming initiative. Vanessa has a graduate degree from Georgetown University. Her prior experience includes administration at an architecture firm and program coordination at an urban planning foundation.



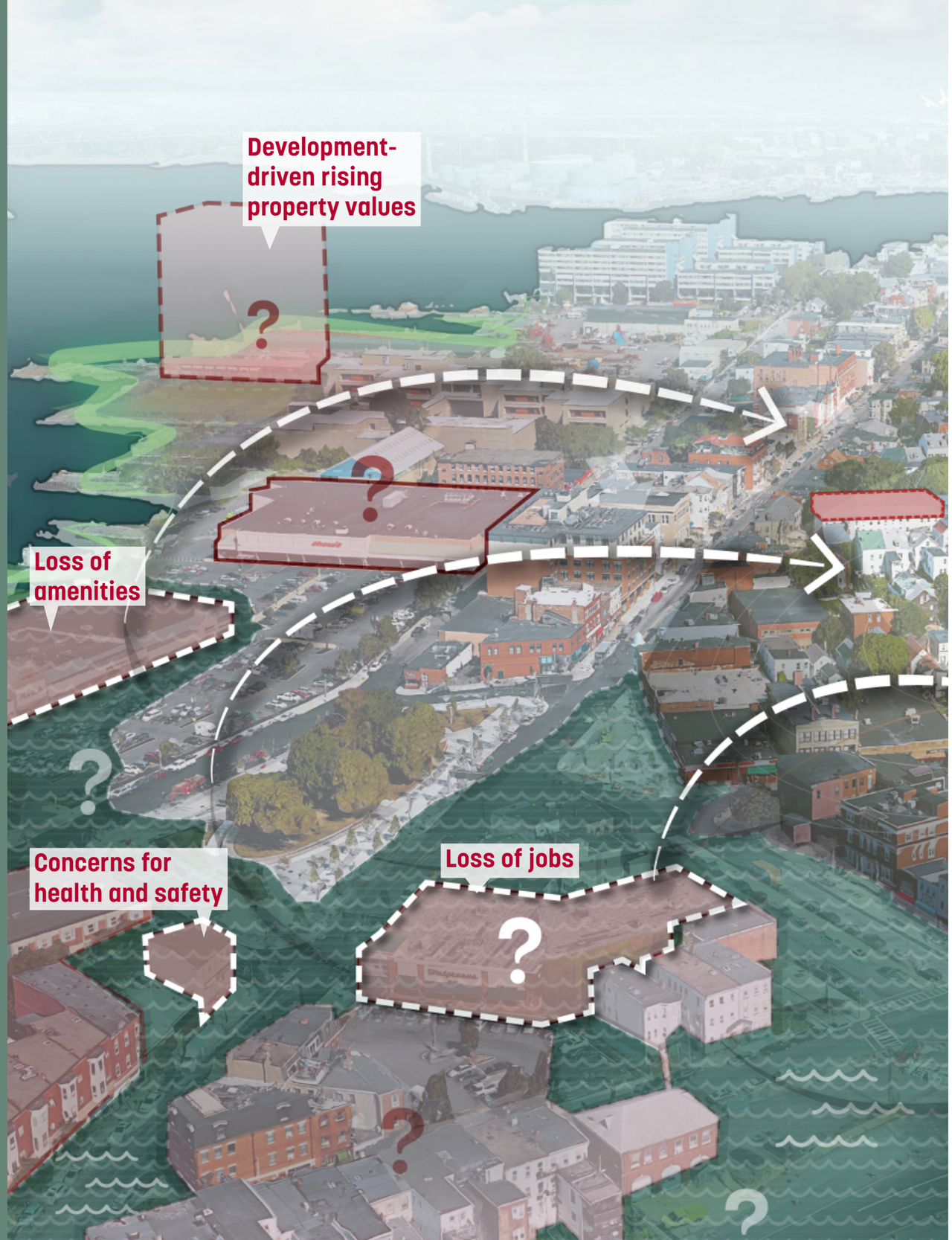
Penelope Taylor

Penelope Taylor designs and manages digital and analog interpretation resources, installations, and games for science and art education, focusing on river ecology for the Charles River Floating Wetland. She has curated science communication exhibitions at the Harvard Forest Fisher Museum and the Somerville Museum. She is also a community and labor organizer.



Laura Jasinski

Laura Jasinski is an urban planner with over ten years in development and activation of urban open space, including at the Trustees of Reservations and the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. As the Charles River Conservancy's Executive Director, she is continuing the legacy of improving the Charles River with projects like the Floating Wetland.



Eastie for Eastie

Collyn Chan, Mario Giampieri, Kelly Leilani Main, Kannan Thiruvengadam

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

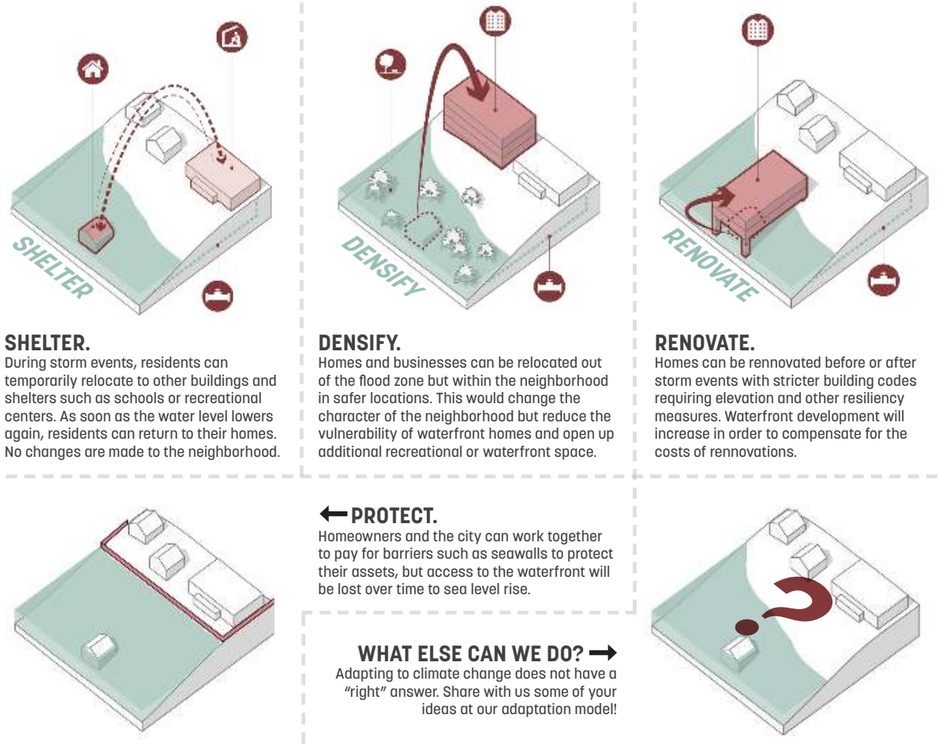
Traditional managed retreat projects do not often take into consideration community coherence or community agency in redesigning the coastline. A community-based managed retreat dialogue and design process is a viable first step in climate adaptation. Eastie for Eastie (E4E) is a project between community partners and urban planners to co-create a toolkit to discuss long-term climate impacts and managed retreat in East Boston.

The toolkit employs a combination of digital and analog tools such as interactive models, web mapping, and games to give community members the opportunity to experiment with the physical and spatial consequences of adaptation strategies. Adaptation scenarios are further developed through engagement workshops that focus on pathways to implementation, as well as the costs and opportunities of such actions.

E4E co-creates best practices to help guide community understanding and build power to act on the long-term effects of climate change on current and future life in East Boston.

◂ *Eastie for Eastie concept graphic | Eastie for Eastie in partnership with Sasaki*

What are some of the options?



SHELTER.
During storm events, residents can temporarily relocate to other buildings and shelters such as schools or recreational centers. As soon as the water level lowers again, residents can return to their homes. No changes are made to the neighborhood.

DENSIFY.
Homes and businesses can be relocated out of the flood zone but within the neighborhood in safer locations. This would change the character of the neighborhood but reduce the vulnerability of waterfront homes and open up additional recreational or waterfront space.

RENOVATE.
Homes can be rennovated before or after storm events with stricter building codes requiring elevation and other resiliency measures. Waterfront development will increase in order to compensate for the costs of rennovations.

← PROTECT.
Homeowners and the city can work together to pay for barriers such as seawalls to protect their assets, but access to the waterfront will be lost over time to sea level rise.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO? →
Adapting to climate change does not have a "right" answer. Share with us some of your ideas at our adaptation model!

▲ *Illustrated options for addressing climate change | Eastie for Eastie*

COMMUNITY

Direct engagement has been with East Boston residents who participated in E4E events and outreach. The project team has directly engaged with East Boston youth (primarily high school students), with residents (renters and owners) at neighborhood associations, and with East Boston community leaders whose work relates to climate justice and housing. In addition to these direct events, E4E also has had indirect engagement with East Boston residents who have heard the team on the *What's Up, Eastie?* radio show, or seen E4E's posts on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Since East Boston also has a large Spanish-speaking population, the team intentionally translated all of the materials into Spanish to ensure that information is accessible to as many residents in Eastie as possible. At specified events, interpreters were available to conduct live translation.

STAKEHOLDERS

E4E has worked to engage a number of different stakeholders on the concept of managed retreat. In addition to East Boston residents who may be impacted by climate change, E4E has met with public officials at both the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including Boston's Environment Department, Waterfront Planning, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), and the Offices of Senator Joseph A. Boncore and City Councilor Lydia Edwards. In addition to meeting with public officials, E4E attended local development meetings for projects like Suffolk Downs. E4E was present at events hosted by peer organizations: Friends of the East Boston Greenway, a Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) Youth Rise event, Jeffries Point Neighborhood Association meetings, and Gove Street Citizens Association meetings, and the team hosted its own events at the East Boston Branch Library. The team also hosted a toolkit workshop with MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning to share best practices with planners and practitioners.

IMPACT

Considering short-term impacts, E4E was able to engage with community members, advocates, and political representatives in a number of formal and informal settings to discuss the perception of Boston's climate adaptation strategies. This outreach included explaining aspects of the potential threat that climate change and extreme events may have on East Boston. The team also was able to introduce the idea of managed retreat and hear residents, in their own words, begin to form ideas and understandings around climate impacts and how managed retreat may be

PARTNERSHIPS

7

events in partnership with other organizations

OUTREACH

12

small group discussions

PUBLICITY

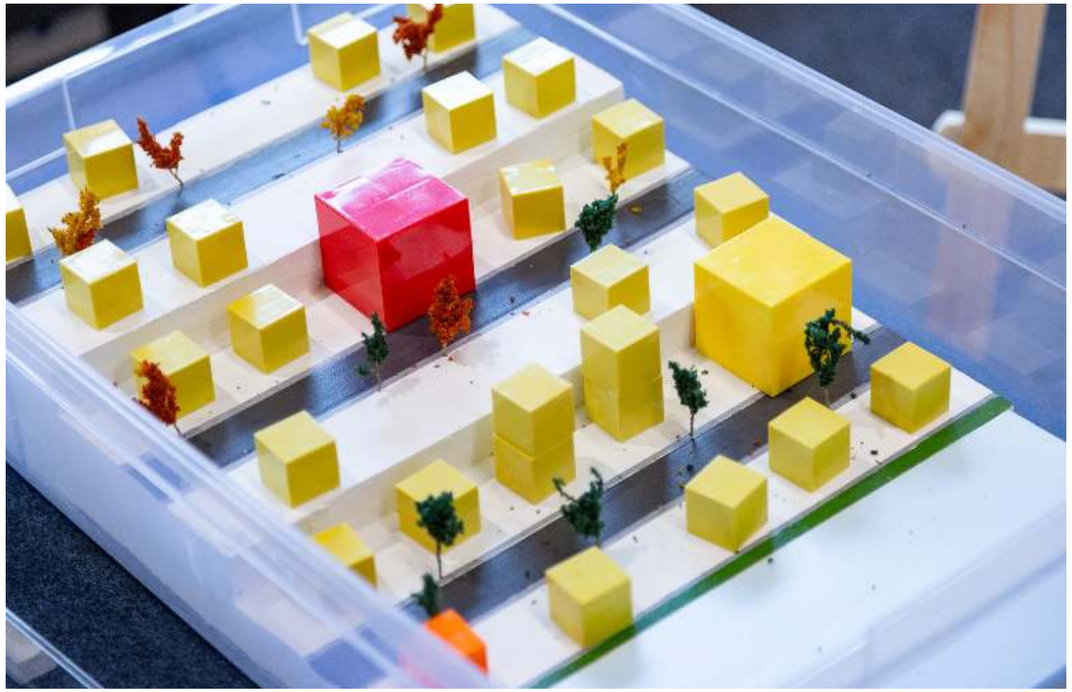
2

local radio shows

OUTREACH

150+

individuals engaged

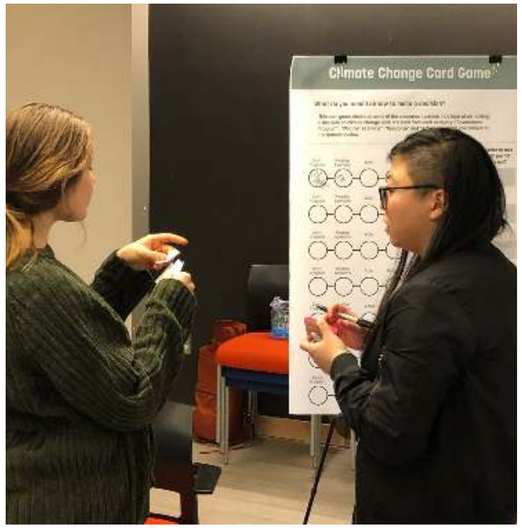


▲ *Managed retreat interactive 3D model | Eastie for Eastie*

adopted as a long-term adaptation strategy. The team collected a relatively small but meaningful sample (n=64) of survey respondents who indicated their experience with flood events in East Boston, levels of engagement with City of Boston climate change planning efforts, whether or not residents plan to relocate, and familiarity with the concept of managed retreat. These responses are meaningful because this was a self-selecting sample (i.e., relatively willing to engage around climate change planning or civic participation) and also because it helps with gauging the baseline understanding across demographics on how to discuss climate change in East Boston.

E4E developed a number of engagement tools that can be used for outreach surrounding the topics of climate change in coastal cities, adaptation, and managed retreat. These tools include a series of infographics in English and Spanish that explain, in straightforward language, managed retreat and climate adaptation strategies; an adaptation strategy role-playing card game (not specific to the Boston context); and a web tool allowing users to identify whether their home or location of interest is in a flood zone or projected flood zone and the probability that neighborhood assets (like schools, grocery stores, transportation routes) will be inundated during storm events. In fall 2019, these tools will be available through the Sasaki Foundation website for download and use by interested parties. The sharing of these best practices can move engagement processes forward and set a new baseline for entering the conversation of managed retreat with at-risk communities.

Within East Boston, E4E hopes that the engagement and outreach catalyzed by the project will start a conversation within the community about how to adapt to climate impacts in the long term. Preliminary outreach efforts have resulted in small gains towards exposing the possibility of using managed retreat as a strategy for dealing with sea level rise and coastal flooding. Since managed retreat is a long-term goal, E4E hopes that the early contribution will help set the stage for a longer-term strategy that can be adopted by the city and the region.



▲ *Adaptation card game in action at engagement event, March 2019 | Eastie for Eastie*

▼ *Infographics translated into Spanish | Eastie for Eastie*



COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Because this was a preliminary engagement process, the primary way E4E knows about the community's awareness is through attendance at E4E events and participation in the project's survey. Kannan Thiruvengadam has been the team's eyes and ears on the ground in East Boston and he has formed new relationships with concerned neighbors who are interested in learning more about the topics addressed in E4E. Of particular importance is the fact that some people have reached out and asked for more information, mentioning that they would be interested in having a conversation with the team about their concerns. The fact that people want to know more means that they have concerns and are aware that they might be impacted—asking people what questions they have is an important part of our toolkit.

PROJECT VISIBILITY

The project has been visible through numerous public meetings, social media, and participation in other events. E4E had a presence in the team's partner organizations (Eastie Farm), partner events (neighborhood associations, Friends of the East Boston Greenway), and local climate leaders. The team has also showcased the project through local radio, installed project material at the East Boston Branch Library, and hosted events at local institutions to bolster E4E's presence.

COMMUNITY MILESTONES

In fall 2019, E4E will be sharing all findings with local climate justice and housing organizations as well as with the City of Boston in the form of a toolkit for community engagement. The team hopes to share with the City of Boston, through the project's findings, that there is an interest among homeowners and households to understand more about what managed retreat is, especially as it relates to what actions the City of Boston will take and what might happen to property values. Given how politically unpopular the conversation around managed retreat is in many cities, this could represent a future significant milestone for Boston. While these findings have not been implemented immediately, E4E has been working to raise the awareness of city and state officials on

the community's opinions about this topic. In doing so, E4E hopes to utilize these new connections and bring these concerns into discussions with relevant city planning agencies. It is important to note that it appears to be the perfect time for this conversation because of the current work on the East Boston Master Plan, Climate Ready South Boston, Climate Ready Dorchester, and other initiatives.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOUNDATION

As the Sasaki Foundation mission holds, design is an agent of change. The E4E project has combined practice, research, and public engagement to come up with design strategies that can simplify the complex problems of climate change and make the concepts of climate adaptation planning more accessible to the general public. E4E has been co-creating strategies for adaptation with members of the community from many ages, ethnicities, and incomes by asking questions that address the different concerns of diverse groups. While managed retreat has primarily been approached as an individualistic strategy, E4E also has promoted more collective action in the interest of facilitating collective impact.

Of particular relevance for the team has been the design of a 3D model and an adaptation card game which helps to communicate the basic principles of managed retreat and to trigger a conversation with members of the community in an equitable way. The model, which is a highly simplified version of a coastline, introduces community members to the concepts of sea level rise and how rising water levels may impact property. Using basic magnetic building blocks, participants can explore different adaptation strategies and develop their own language of aspiration for the future of their neighborhoods. Engagement from community members through design is central to achieving the E4E goal of understanding collective action in the face of climate adaptation and managed retreat.



Adaptation strategy role-playing card game | Eastie for Eastie

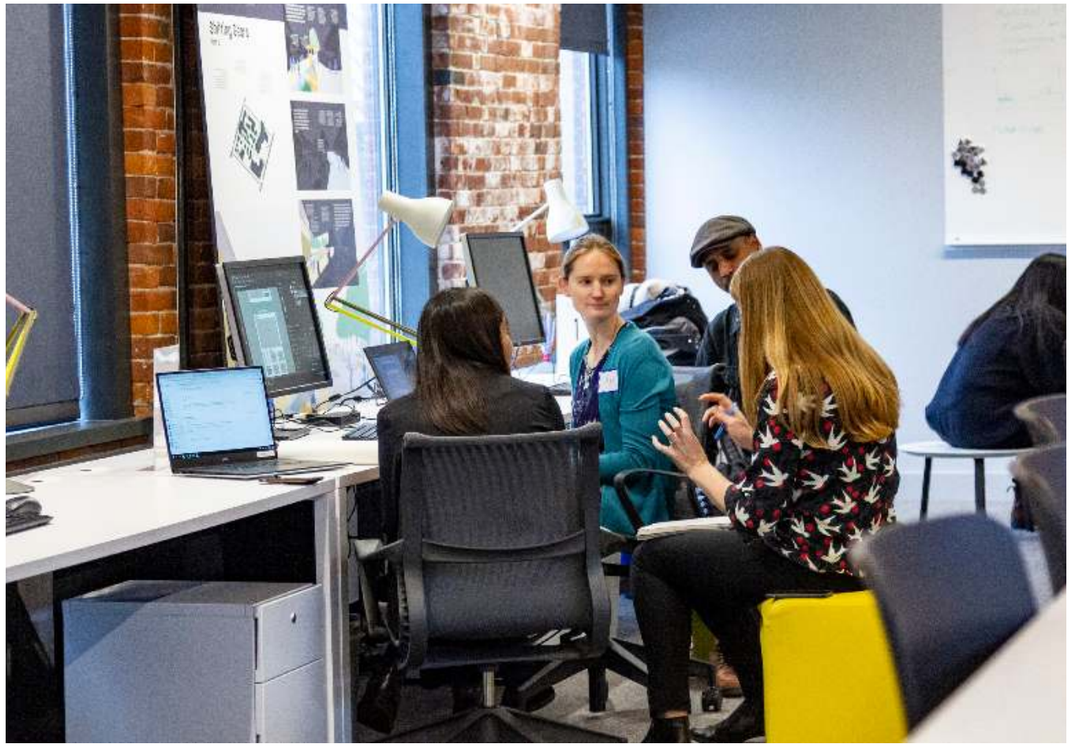
NEXT STEPS

The first next step is continued outreach and engagement with the community in East Boston. As a result of the team's outreach through June 2019, a few households have contacted the team interested in having one-on-one conversations regarding concerns about flooding. E4E is currently planning and arranging one-on-ones or a collective gathering of households in the neighborhood to hear their questions and concerns, and will then work with them to find answers and information that meets their needs.

Secondly, E4E will continue to develop the team's public-facing website (www.eastieforeastie.com) to ensure there is an updated repository of information that is useful for residents in Eastie as well as others who might be interested in learning more about managed retreat.

In fall 2019, E4E will also publish the team's *Toolkit for Managed Retreat* on the project website, which will be full documentation of what tools the team used and how they can be adapted. The toolkit is intended to be a document that E4E can share with other community organizations and planning offices on how to engage with community members proactively about managed retreat as a viable adaptation strategy. In addition to providing information, the website will serve as a contact portal for interested parties with questions for the team or individuals looking for resources.

Lastly, E4E will use findings and learning outcomes from this project to provide input and feedback to ongoing city processes.



▲ *Eastie for Eastie design charrette in the Incubator at Sasaki | Sasaki*

STAY CONNECTED

www.eastieforeastie.com

eastie4eastie

@eastie4eastie

@eastie4eastie

RESEARCH TEAM



Collyn Chan

Collyn Chan is an urban planner focused on climate adaptation planning and community engagement. As a 2018 Rappaport Fellow, Collyn engaged with East Boston residents to complete a report for Boston City Council on housing affordability and climate adaptation. Collyn leads the E4E engagement process.



Mario Giampieri

Mario Giampieri is an urban planner and spatial analyst with experience building tools for engaging with coastal communities around vulnerability to climate change. His previous work included hosting workshops with coastal communities to identify climate risk and design visions for neighborhoods in the future. Mario leads E4E digital development.



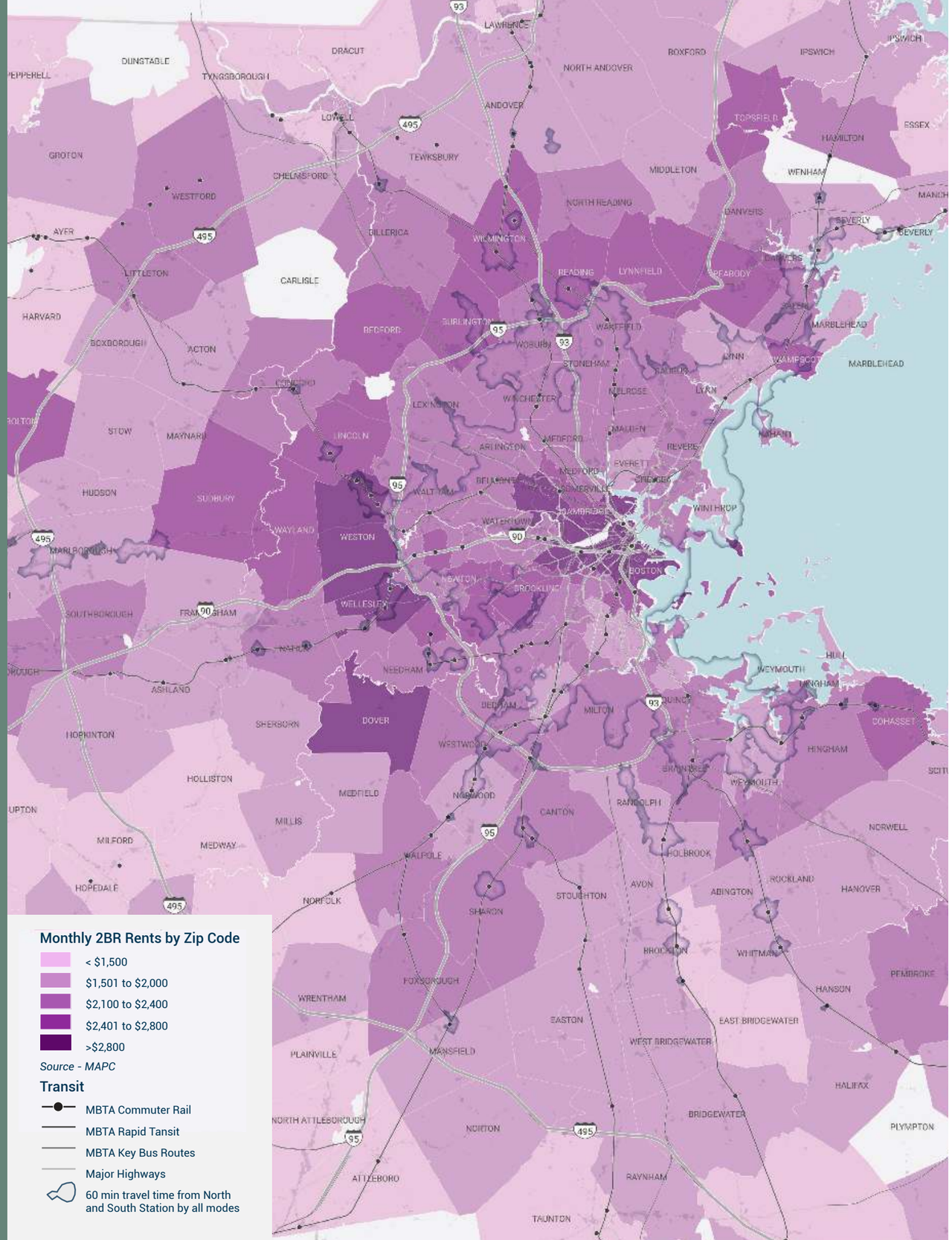
Kelly Leilani Main

Kelly Leilani Main is an urban planner and designer focused on using environmental risks to inform urban design strategies. She has worked with community groups on advocating for the human right against forced eviction and displacement from economic, political, and environmental forces. She leads E4E discussion on responses to displacement.



Kannan Thiruvengadam

Kannan Thiruvengadam is the director of Eastie Farm, an urban farm focused on community resilience. He also hosts *What's Up Eastie?*, a radio show about local issues in East Boston. He has studied climate science, permaculture, and community engagement. He leads on the cultural competency of the E4E project.



The ECHOLocator:

Expanding Choice in Housing Opportunities

Nicholas Kelly, Anson Stewart, Robert Terrell

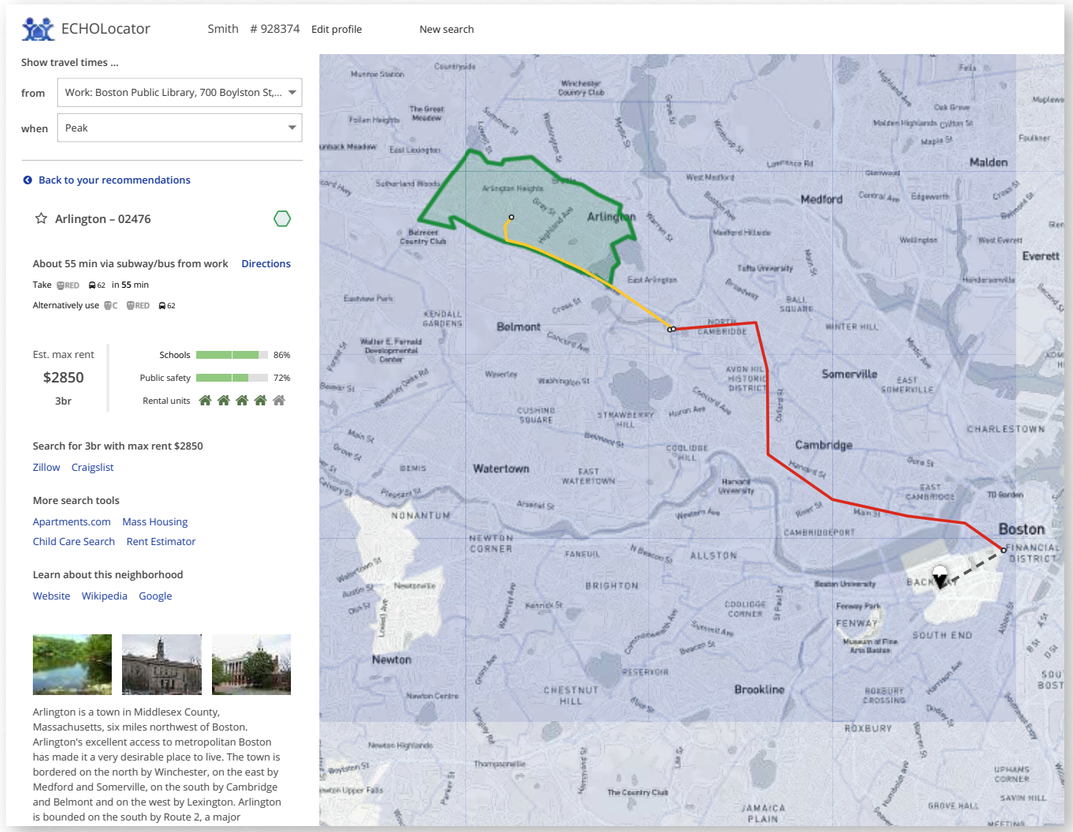
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ECHOLocator project—ECHO stands for Expanding Choice in Housing Opportunities—is a new digital tool in development to help improve information on neighborhoods available to low-income families in Massachusetts. Motivated by research that neighborhoods can profoundly affect the outcomes of low-income children, this tool is inspired by the idea that improved information on neighborhoods can help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Evidence has never been stronger in support of the fact that where individuals grow up strongly affects their life opportunities. The housing choice voucher program provides subsidies to five million Americans and represents a powerful, yet mostly untapped, mechanism for reducing inequality by enabling low-income individuals to access neighborhoods that provide increased opportunities for their children. However, voucher holders are frequently barred from doing so due to unaffordable rents, expensive or nonexistent transit, informational shortfalls, and a rightful desire to remain connected to their communities.

Designed in conjunction with MIT, the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), and Conveyal, the ECHOLocator uses the latest in transportation analytics in combination with cutting edge data on neighborhoods to help low-income families using housing choice vouchers navigate neighborhoods within Boston and the Greater Boston area. As the first housing search tool of its kind, the ECHOLocator will hopefully provide a new interdisciplinary platform for other housing authorities to adopt in order to empower low-income families across the state and across the country.

Map of monthly two-bedroom rents by zip code | ECHOLocator in partnership with Sasaki



▲ *Neighborhood search results | ECHOLocator*

COMMUNITY

The ECHOLocator program directly impacts housing choice voucher holders, who are all low-income, and the vast majority of whom are people of color. By providing improved, customized neighborhood information for these families the project is therefore greatly benefiting those who need it most. Of the more than 16,000 families served by the BHA's voucher programs (75%+ of whom identify as black and/or Hispanic or Latino), most live in just a few neighborhoods of Boston. Improving equitable access to opportunity areas is a clear mechanism to intervene in intergenerational poverty and rectify decades of racial discrimination in housing.

STAKEHOLDERS

Prior to the Sasaki Foundation Design Grants program, the ECHOLocator team was awarded nearly $30,000 from The Boston Foundation to start work on the app. Since then, the team has leveraged the Design Grant into an additional nearly $50,000 in financial commitment from the BHA.

ECHOLocator partners include Conveyal, a transportation consulting and software company working to create a greener, smarter, and more efficient future; The Boston Foundation, a community foundation working to make life better for everyone in the Boston region; Boston Indicators, the research center at The Boston Foundation with a focus on making Boston more prosperous, equitable, and just; and Azavea, a mission-driven software and data analytics company addressing complex civic, social, and environmental problems.

IMPACT

In the short term, the ECHOLocator will begin to be used in two pilots: families receiving a voucher for the first time, and those who are part of the ECHO pilot program.

In the medium term, assuming the software is successful, the program will roll out to the rest of the BHA's voucher holders.

In the long-term, the project team hopes other housing authorities will adopt the software; it could perhaps even be used in the private market to help low-income families with their housing search. Indeed, this last impact is perhaps the one with the greatest impact. A future version of the ECHOLocator could incorporate affordability to help families find affordable neighborhoods with the neighborhood characteristics they prefer.

ANALYSIS

75%

of voucher holders identify as black and/or Hispanic/Latino

PROCESS

2

pilot programs testing the software's impact

PUBLICITY

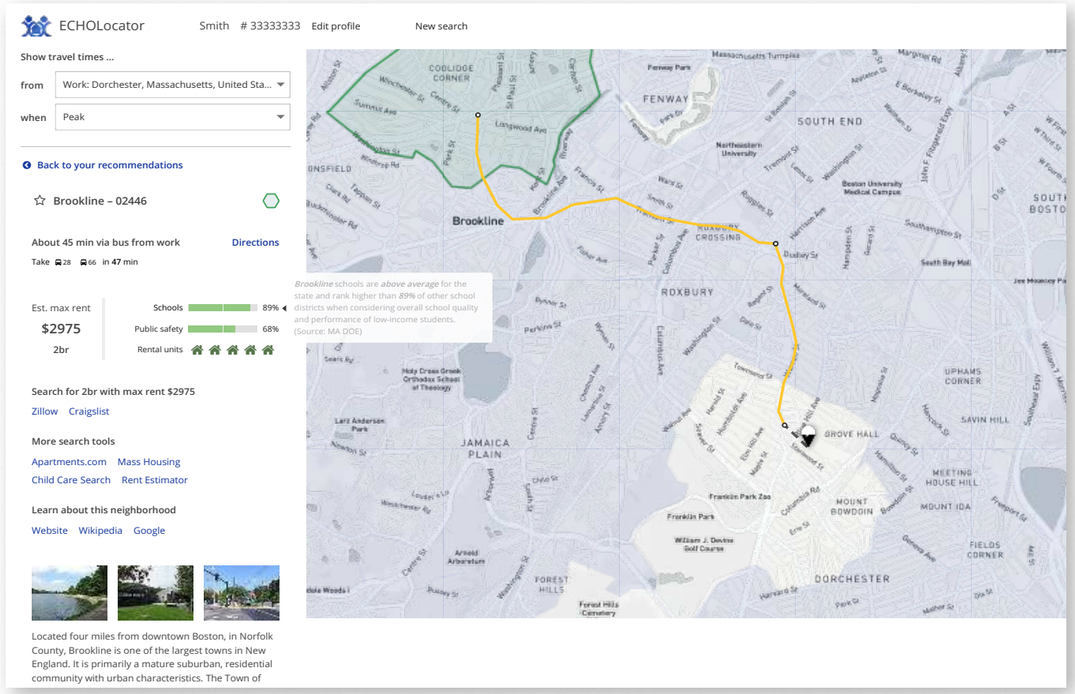
3

Boston Globe articles praising BHA's new approach

IMPACT

750+

families included in the software's pilot programs



▲ *Neighborhood search results | ECHOLocator*

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

In summer 2019, the project team rolled out the ECHOLocator as a pilot program to new voucher holders in conjunction with the BHA's implementation of Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs).

The BHA will be measuring the impact of the program on the neighborhood location decisions of these families. In May 2019, the BHA started carrying out a baseline survey of families' neighborhood preferences and well-being to get a sense of their neighborhood preferences. The BHA also began a texting survey to see how voucher holders' neighborhood searches are going. The BHA can then compare how people's search patterns are changing once they start using the ECHOLocator software, and whether they are actually able to move to the communities in which they are interested.

PROJECT VISIBILITY

The ECHOLocator project will have an immediate impact in the search processes of new voucher holders and those in the pilot program. It will make the search processes dramatically easier and more helpful for families navigating their sea of housing options. Particularly as the SAFMR program sets housing subsidies by zip codes, with a different payment standard for every bedroom size, the ECHOLocator's intuitive digital interface will turn what could be an extremely complicated housing search process into one that is intuitive, and even fun.

COMMUNITY MILESTONES

The ECHOLocator project meets the BHA's duty to affirmatively further fair housing. This duty, as required by the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule (AFFH), requires municipalities and housing authorities to take steps to reduce segregation in their communities and provide

EDITORIAL

Fighting neighborhood segregation one voucher at a time



A view of the Boston skyline. (ERIN CLARK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE/FILE 2018)

Neighborhood matters. That's clearer now than it's ever been.

Over the last few years, economists at Harvard and other leading universities have published a series of landmark studies showing that low-income children who move from struggling to thriving communities fare substantially better as adults than the kids who stay behind.

◀ *Editorial in the* Boston Globe, *May 27, 2019*

increased access to opportunity. The ECHOLocator program perfectly fulfills that obligation for the BHA by helping families access a wider variety of areas in Boston and the Greater Boston area, and by stopping the concentration of poverty that the housing choice voucher program currently contributes to in the area.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOUNDATION

The ECHOLocator project embodies the Sasaki Foundation's mission to use design to address our greatest social challenges, especially social equity. As a new cross-disciplinary app that uses the latest in design techniques to convey information on neighborhoods in an intuitive way, the ECHOLocator shows how design, technology, and urban planning can be used together to further the social good.

As a project that has also been co-designed with the BHA and the communities that it serves, the ECHOLocator project embodies the Sasaki Foundation's commitment to community as well.

▼ *Team member Anson Stewart speaks at the Sasaki Foundation Speaker Series: What's Next for Transportation?, February 2019 | Sasaki*



NEXT STEPS

This is only the first version of the ECHOLocator tool. As it is rolled out, the BHA is planning on presenting it to a number of non-profits and other housing authorities interested in adopting the software. The ECHOLocator could then be used to help low-income families more broadly in the private market.



▲ *ECHOLocator design charrette in the Incubator at Sasaki | Sasaki*

SPONSOR ORGANIZATION

The Boston Housing Authority (BHA) provides affordable housing to more than 58,000 residents in and around the City of Boston. Residents are assisted through a combination of public housing and federal and state voucher subsidy programs that provide a wide variety of housing opportunities. As the largest public housing authority in New England, the BHA houses close to nine percent of the city's residents.

The BHA's mission is to provide stable, quality affordable housing for low and moderate income persons; to deliver these services with integrity and mutual accountability; and to create healthy living environments which serve as catalysts for the transformation from dependency to economic self-sufficiency.

STAY CONNECTED

www.bostonhousing.org

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@BHA_Boston

@nickelly

@ansoncfit

RESEARCH TEAM



Nicholas Kelly

Nicholas Kelly is a PhD candidate in Urban Studies and Planning at MIT. His research focuses on affordable housing and public policy, with a focus on segregation, fair housing, regulation, and political theory. Nicholas has worked at New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development and at the New York City Economic Development Corporation.



Anson Stewart

Anson Stewart is a graduate of the MIT interdepartmental Doctoral Program in Transportation, with international experience researching public transport systems. His dissertation involved deploying interactive mapping tools for stakeholder engagement and developing measures of urban accessibility that incorporate detailed land-use and vehicle location data.



Robert Terrell

Robert Terrell brings decades of experience working in Boston on urban development issues such as fair housing, public transportation, historic preservation, economic development, open space, and zoning/land use. Robert serves as the Fair Housing, Equity and Inclusion Officer for the BHA, and previously served as Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston.

G|Code House

Bridgette Wallace, Lindsay Nuon, Rizel Bobb-Semple

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

G|Code House is an innovative co-living, learning, and working incubator based in Roxbury, Massachusetts, dedicated to providing young women of color between the ages 18 to 25 with the tools they need to succeed in today's business world. G|Code aims to produce change makers who are not only ready to make an impact in their careers, but are prepared to be leaders, innovators, and young women who collectively advance to make a difference in their communities.

The crossroads at which many girls find themselves after graduating from high school can be intimidating and confusing, and for many young women of color, securing food, shelter, and safety often takes precedence over pursuing post-secondary schooling or careers.

As a proposed pilot program, G|Code House is designed to help young women of color who have an interest and/or aptitude for computers or technology, but do not know how to develop their interest or understand the opportunities. G|Code's co-living environment helps address many challenges these young women face, such as housing insecurity, access to post-secondary education, and placement support, while helping to minimize outside distractions. The program consists of nine months of in-class training, six months of an internship/co-op, and nine months of specialty training.

By collaborating with industry partners, these young women will have opportunities for internships and entry-level jobs, and will be better prepared if they choose to attend a four-year college. In addition to learning cutting-edge technology skills and gaining employment, they will find support, mentoring, and counseling in a safe, focused home.

◀ *Rendering of G|Code House basement | Sasaki*



▲ *Rendering of G|Code House courtyard | Sasaki*

COMMUNITY

The demographics G|Code seeks to affect are underserved black and Latinx women between the ages of 18 and 25. Participants will demonstrate housing insecurity and will be from Greater Boston neighborhoods such as Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. G|Code and its participants will be members of the Hutchings Street and Garrison-Trotter Neighborhood Associations to maintain support and increase awareness of the activities taking place in the program. This relationship is a critical identifier of G|Code's success, as it supports the program in fostering community connections and improving the quality of life for neighbors by investing in young women of color.

Given that black women represent only three percent of women in tech nationally, G|Code also seeks to affect the technology industry in Boston and worldwide by introducing a skilled workforce to an industry that is in serious need of increased diversity.

STAKEHOLDERS

G|Code received seed funding from Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) and the Roxbury Trust Fund, which supported consulting services, pursuit of 501(c)(3) status, a soft launch symposium, website design, and fundraising collateral. Funding also helped develop the curriculum and programmatic outline—instrumental in requests to partners for support.

Additionally, the project team engaged with new stakeholders and partners such as VMware, Akamai, Intrepid, and Toast, to provide internship opportunities and funding. Outreach efforts created educational, coworking, and event space partnerships with the Kendall Square Association, InsightSquared, and Roxbury Community College. The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), Girls Who Code, Apprenti, and Boston Public Schools will act as recruitment partners. Engagement with development firm Pinck & Co enabled G|Code to work with Suffolk Construction for cost estimation and potential financial support.

IMPACT

Incubating technologically skilled young women of color will bring undiscovered potential to an industry sorely in need of diversity. Black, Hispanic, and Asian women are among the least likely to pursue computer science as a major. Increasing representation of women of color in the tech field is G|Code's main goal, with the added benefit of minimizing gentrification in the Roxbury area.

ANALYSIS

10%

of 2016 computer science grads were women of color[1]

OUTREACH

11,350+

direct engagement across digital platforms

IMPACT

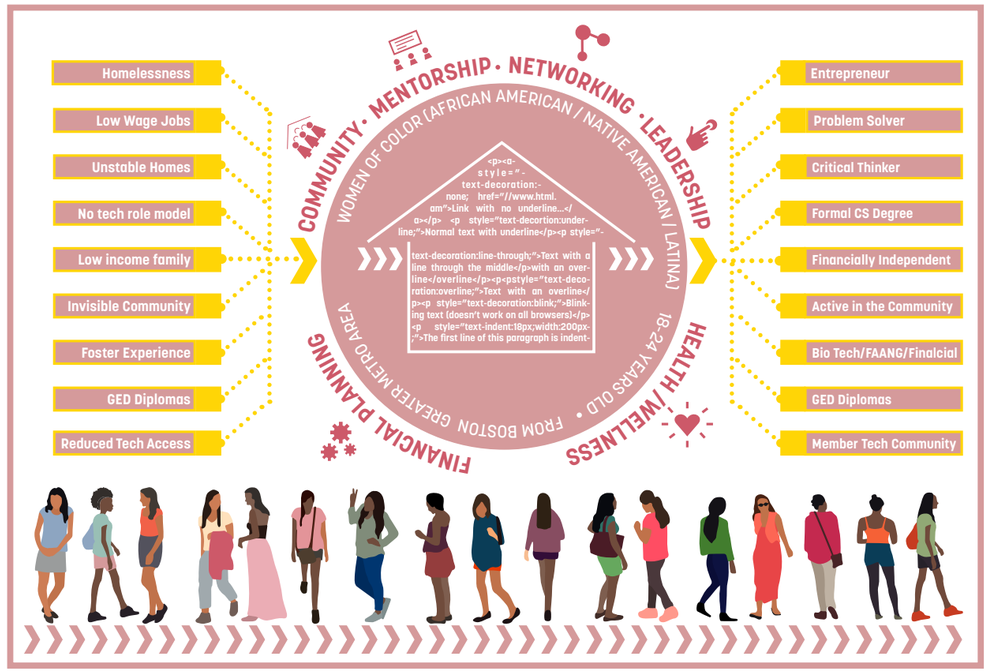
10

tech companies committed to providing internships

IMPACT

75+

individuals attended G|Code House soft launch



▲ *What is G|Code House? | G|Code House in partnership with Sasaki*

In the short term, G|Code will aggressively engage in empowering young women of color with technical coding skills and provide them with a stable housing environment for them to learn.

As a response to fundraising efforts, the team has realigned the business plan. A phased approach, which permits G|Code House to launch in 2019, capitalizes on momentum created by positive media exposure and maintains mission continuity while ensuring viability.

The first phase renovates the main building to house the G|Code program and creates a first floor rental unit. During this phase, G|Code will identify common streams of funding as well as target more unconventional methods of raising capital. This phase also gives G|Code time to prove the concept, offering a unique value proposition for potential donors to invest in longer-term project development.

The second phase includes the basement media lab, and the third phase identifies funding for the carriage house coworking space, which will serve as an additional revenue generator by hosting meetups, classes, and hackathons. These phases will allow G|Code to further connect participants with mentoring, employment opportunities, and the chance for upward mobility and self-actualization.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

As part of the process to refine G|Code's business model, the team and advisors held three community engagement meetings, seeking feedback and support. IncluDe—a Roxbury-based female-minority-owned web development company and partner—designed and launched the website, establishing G|Code's online presence and detailing the work of the enterprise. These milestones keep G|Code connected locally, continuing the momentum gained from homegrown support.

In March 2019, G|Code hosted a soft launch at the Incubator at Sasaki, which included a panel discussion and more than 75 attendees. The panel, moderated



by Lindsay Noun, included four young women at various stages of careers in tech. Three of the young women—Pariss Chandler (Genuine), Rizel Bobb-Semple (Hi Marley), and Maria Cristina De Valle (WeSpire)—worked in tech as developers, and the fourth—Janine Thomas—was completing her computer science degree at Wentworth Institute of Technology. The discussion provided a more intimate understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist for each of the stakeholders. The feedback from the meetings, website, talks, and panel discussion resulted in a 26 percent increase in social media likes, three local donors, and three additional media engagements.

PROJECT VISIBILITY

G|Code convened three neighborhood meetings to provide a common understanding of co-living, to seek feedback, and to galvanize support. The team also presented at the monthly Garrison-Trotter Neighborhood Association meeting, and met with a diverse group of city, state, and business stakeholders. The meetings increased awareness of the initiative, served as a starting point for ongoing engagement, and furthered public involvement.

The community meetings were facilitated by local clergy Reverend Liz Walker and guided by a previous neighborhood survey that offered residents a safe space to express concerns and provide feedback. That survey revealed the need for more information on

◀ *Soft launch event, Creating New Tech Training Grounds for Women of Color: Why It Matters, March 2019 | Sasaki*

▼ *Feature in* Boston Magazine, *March 1, 2018*

This Aging Roxbury Victorian Will Become a Home for Minority Women Pursuing STEM

The [G]Code House aims to combat gentrification, invest in youth, and empower women in one fell swoop.

by MADELINE BILIS • *3/1/2018, 8:15 a.m.*

Sign up for our weekly home and property newsletter, featuring homes for sale, neighborhood happenings, and more.

EMAIL ADDRESS SUBSCRIBE



The [G]Code House in progress / Photo courtesy of Sasaki

co-living and its potential neighborhood impact, so it was important to provide a platform for the community to understand how new housing models can serve to grow the neighborhood workforce and entrepreneurs from within the community. The community process focused on getting residents and stakeholders to see the value in G|Code, which builds on the community's existing strengths by supporting and nurturing residents and linking them to opportunities while maintaining community stability and positive growth.

The meetings helped G|Code identify organizations working on the issues of affordable housing, workforce development, and gender and diversity inclusion in tech. Following the engagement process, several community members, an institutional partner, and potential funders all inquired about replicating the initiative elsewhere.

COMMUNITY MILESTONES

G|Code falls in line with an emergent housing typology called co-living, which the City of Boston is exploring as part of its Housing Innovation Lab. The Lab works on increasing housing supply by supporting diversity in housing stock and seeking innovative housing solutions to the lack of affordable housing across Boston, which is pushing community residents, especially young people of color, out of the city.

The G|Code team met with Marcy Ostberg, Director of the Housing Innovation Lab, Sheila Dillon, Chief of Housing and Director of Neighborhood Development, and Christine Poff, Community Preservation Director, to present this new housing model, which builds on the co-living concept by providing education services an amenity. The team was excited to provide a new housing product that leverages adaptability, density, and adaptive reuse of large older homes to provide affordability, economic mobility, and a workforce housing solution designed for young women of color who have an interest in coding and who want to remain in the community.

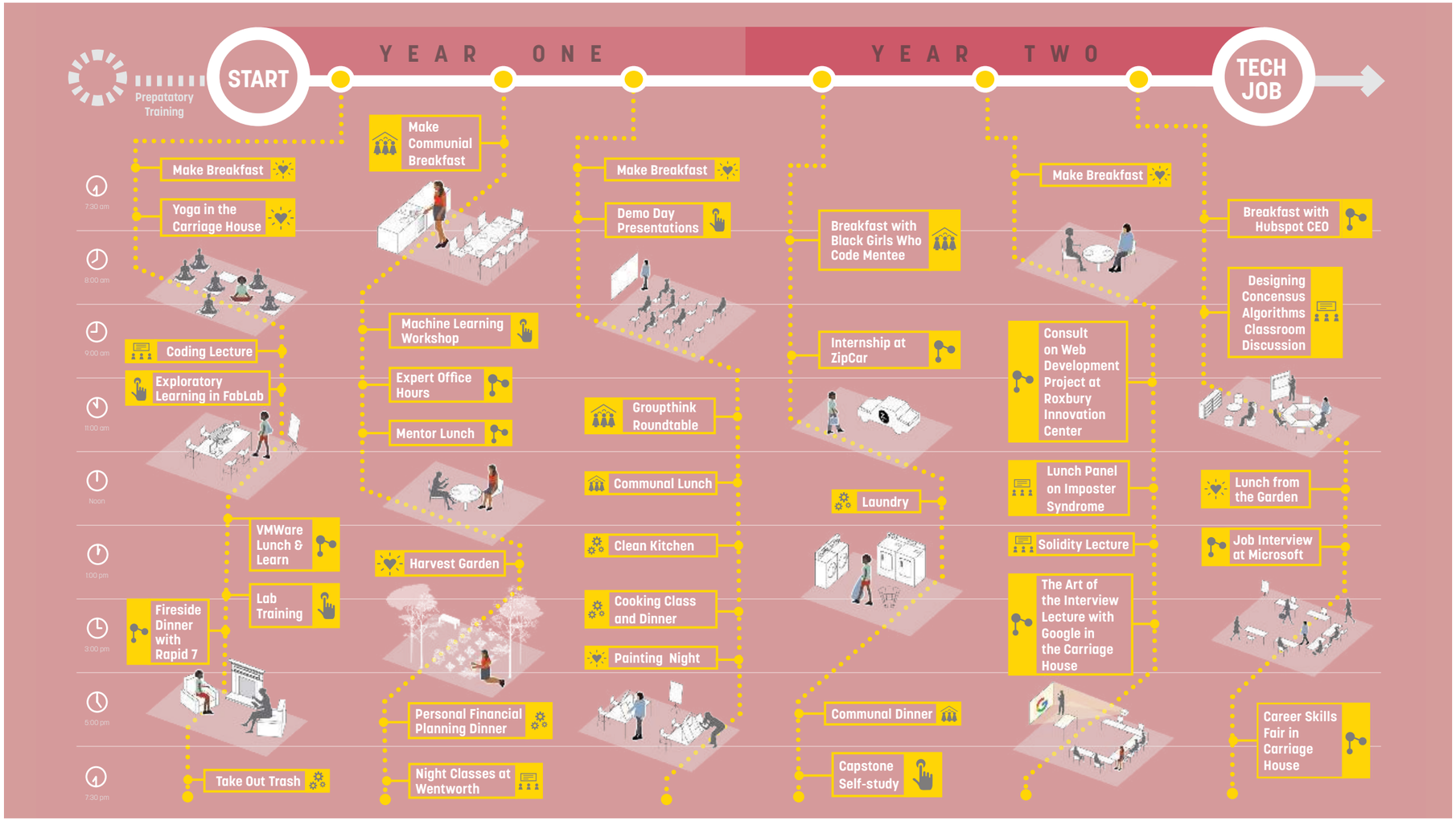
The mission at G|Code is focused on working within the city mandate to provide a workforce housing option that addresses gentrification by educating black and brown young women for a career in tech, and encouraging co-living by influencing the adaptive reuse of existing housing stock.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOUNDATION

In line with the Sasaki Foundation's mission, G|Code stabilizes Boston's communities by providing great educational opportunities to the most vulnerable residents—young women of color. Roxbury's location is extremely impactful given it is experiencing gentrification at such a rapid rate that millennials of color are being pushed out of a neighborhood poised for growth and transformation.

This innovative, community-based approach to leveraging public-private partnership will build on the state's track record of harnessing private-sector expertise and resources to develop quality affordable housing that stabilizes neighborhoods grappling with gentrification and increases the capacity of residents to use existing resources to self-determine how they develop and retain residents. Building a strong, connected community is an important part of designing projects that have lasting impact within communities that are experiencing change, which is central to G|Code's mission of improving the neighborhood as a whole.

G|Code's program model is attracting and stimulating innovative thinkers and doers by offering young women of color opportunities to be creative and productive beyond the edges of our community. The house symbolically stands to nurture and develop our most marginalized young people.



A typical day at the G|Code House | G|Code House in partnership with Sasaki

NEXT STEPS

By the end of 2019, once approvals are in place, G|Code will begin renovating the house for commercial and residential use. Seven young women will have the opportunity to live, learn, and work in the house, with community partners providing education and training opportunities and classroom spaces for residents to learn about the latest technologies, strategies, and business models. G|Code interns are currently working to increase visibility in an effort to recruit the first cohort by fall 2019.

To secure funding for future phases, the team is working to offer multiple donation platforms in hopes of encouraging crowdsourced fundraising. Securing 501(c)(3) status will be critical in getting the property fully renovated by summer 2020.

Additionally, G|Code advanced to the second round for two highly visible grants with the Cummings Foundation and with Technology Underwriting Greater Good (TUGG). Both urged reapplication once the program starts given its innovative approach to housing, workforce development, and tech inclusion.



▲ *G|Code House design charrette in the Incubator at Sasaki | Sasaki*

STAY CONNECTED

www.thegcodehouse.com

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@gcodehouse

RESEARCH TEAM



Bridgette Wallace

Bridgette Wallace is the founder and Executive Director of G|Code House. She is also an out-of-the-box thinker who pushes hard for equity and inclusion for those that are undervalued and overlooked. Her goal is diversity and inclusion through creating and supporting additional tech pipelines that enhance the city's innovation ecosystem.



Lindsay Nuon

Lindsay Nuon is Board Chair of G|Code House as well as curriculum advisor. Lindsay began her career in STEM in the US Armed Forces and worked in the US Intelligence Community and with government agencies including NCIS and the FBI. She advises startups, mentors, and speaks on tech-related topics.



Rizel Bobb-Semple

Rizel Bobb-Semple is the student recruitment and retention advisor for G|Code House. After interning as a help desk technician at HubSpot through Hack.Diversity, Rizel gained a new interest in software development and attended Resilient Coders, a coding boot camp. She currently works as a software developer at Hi Marley.



Please Touch the Art

Aneleise Ruggles, Matt Jatkola, Georgina Kleege, Tanja Milojevic,
Roberta Miller, Karissa Coady

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presented by the Mosesian Center for the Arts, Please Touch the Art is a multi-sensory exhibition aimed at creating an immersive artistic experience that engages all of the senses. Not only does Please Touch the Art challenge visitors to consider how they may engage with a work of art beyond seeing, it also challenges visual artists to consider how their work engages a diverse range of audience members.

Also included in this project is a History of Blind Accessibility in the Arts exhibit, which features a selection of artifacts and imagery related to over a century of innovation, adaptation, and inclusion. Please Touch the Art invites sighted and visually impaired visitors to go beyond looking at artwork and encourages them to engage their other senses to experience each piece. The exhibit addresses issues about the nature of aesthetic appreciation and perception of art. It also provides an inclusive and accessible experience for all visitors with the use of braille and large-print gallery guides, audio guides, tactile maps, and navigational tools.

Creating a more inclusive and accessible model for the Mosesian Center's operations has greater implications beyond having a successful Please Touch the Art exhibition. The Center is committed to continuing to make considerations for both its facilities and its programming to ensure anyone who enters the front door is valued, respected, and has equal artistic resources available to them.

◂ *Child touching art | Rachel E. Casey*



▲ *Guided tour training | Aneleise Ruggles*

COMMUNITY

This exhibition was designed to directly impact visitors of all abilities, while taking special care to ensure all elements of the exhibit are accessible to patrons with low vision and blindness. Please Touch the Art serves as an opportunity to build a broader awareness and understanding of the challenges the visually impaired community faces on a day-to-day basis, creating empathy by providing contextual, organic experiences to sighted exhibit visitors.

The team paid careful attention to the many variations that exist within the scope of accessibility needs that patrons with low vision and blindness have, and generated navigational and educational tools to support these needs. Of the participating artists in this exhibition, 25 percent are blind or have low vision. The team has engaged experts and advocates in blind arts accessibility at every stage of the process including curation, exhibition design, resource development, and institutional accessibility.

The constituency for this exhibit comes from all over the Greater Boston and Metrowest regions and beyond, but most prominently from Watertown, Newton, Waltham, Cambridge, Allston-Brighton, Belmont, Natick, Brookline, Somerville, and Arlington.

STAKEHOLDERS

The Mosesian Center for the Arts partnership with staff and faculty at the Perkins School for the Blind provided the team with a network of resources, scholars, organizations, and insights on accessibility in the arts. The support from Mass Humanities for this project enabled the team to execute the logistics of this exhibition, but also allowed the team to foster a deeper understanding of the considerations the institution should be making to ensure its facilities and programs are accessible to all who engage with the organization.

In 2019, the Mosesian Center for the Arts deepened its commitment to universal participation by being accepted into the Universal Participation Initiative (UP) through the Mass Cultural Council. Both a movement and a designation, UP creates opportunities for leadership, peer networking, and education in universal design principles, audience engagement strategies, and ADA compliance.

IMPACT

In summer 2019, while the exhibition is on display, Please Touch the Art will be seen and touched by thousands of visitors of all abilities who are drawn to the unique nature of this exhibition for a variety of reasons. Sighted patrons are intrigued by the

DIVERSITY

25%

of participating artists have low vision or blindness

COMMUNITY

92.5%

of participating artists are local

EDUCATION

12

guides and staff trained in guided tour best practices

IMPACT

30

new visitors to the exhibition per week



▲ *Patrons touching art | Matt Jatkola*

prospect of being able to break the barriers usually placed on visual arts exhibitions, by having the opportunity to experience artwork through touch. Please Touch the Art provides a visitor with a deeper, physical understanding of the artistic process and the intentions an artist may have had in creating a work of art. Contrasted with this prospect is the opportunity for patrons with blindness and low vision to have an artistic experience that they are otherwise unable to have through traditional exhibitions. Please Touch the Art explores how blindness is represented in art, how blindness affects the lives of visual artists, and how museums and galleries can make visual art accessible to people who are blind. It also explores relationships between visually impaired and sighted communities and the history of accessibility in arts programming.

This exhibit also goes beyond just allowing blind patrons to touch the art, and enables them to feel safe and considered within a public space that has made careful considerations for the needs of all visitors to the facility. Through research and preparations for this exhibition, it became clear that not only did the exhibit need to make considerations for how visitors would tour the artwork and the galleries the work would inhabit, but also for how the organization could build a more accessible model for all programming. Over the next year, the Mosesian Center will continue to develop visual arts programs to be more inclusive of and engaging for all patrons who visit the institution.

Creating a more inclusive and accessible model for the center's operations has greater implications beyond having a successful Please Touch the Art exhibition. The Mosesian Center for the Arts stands to be a landmark for universal participation in the Greater Boston area and beyond. The Mosesian Center attaches great importance to cultivating the closer engagement of diverse communities and how they can engage with visual art.

The team also sees Please Touch the Art as a fantastic community-building opportunity for the region, where visual artists can be challenged to consider how one work of art can impact a diverse range of audience members. The center is committed to continuing to make considerations for both its facilities and its programming to make sure anyone who enters the front door is valued, respected, and has equal artistic resources available to them.



◀ *Matt Jatkola meeting with artists in the Incubator at Sasaki | Aneleise Ruggles*

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Even within the first few days of the exhibition opening on May 23, 2019, the Mosesian Center has encountered dozens of visitors who have never come to the facility before, specifically to experience Please Touch the Art. The organization has made great efforts to expand its outreach to include local, regional, and national institutions that focus on accessibility for individuals with visual impairment, as well as other physical, developmental, and intellectual disabilities. The responses from these organizations have been positive and enthusiastic, with one organization even paying for one of its staff members to travel all the way from Wichita, Kansas, to sit on the panel and attend the exhibition's opening reception as a representative of her organization.

PROJECT VISIBILITY

It is important to articulate that the Mosesian Center for the Arts does not present this exhibition as one that is specifically for blind people, but rather sees this as an exhibition that does not exclude people with blindness or low vision, or other disabilities. It is totally accessible for anyone who would like to experience the exhibition. The team has received great feedback from members of the blind or visually impaired (BVI) community that they enjoy how inclusive the exhibition is and how unique the experience of visiting the exhibition is for them.

▼ *Exhibition postcard | Mosesian Center for the Arts*



The team has hosted several groups, including the local chapter of the Bay State Council of the Blind, The Price Center, and Adult Day Health, to come in and tour the exhibit and engage with the center. These groups and many individual attendees have articulated the desire to visit the facility because they have limited options for visual arts programming that accommodate and acknowledge disabilities in an accessible and inclusive way.

COMMUNITY MILESTONES

The team has developed relationships and facilitated connections with the Perkins School for the Blind, the Watertown Commission on Disability, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and many more organizations. To be the catalyst for dialogue and change related to accessibility in the arts is extremely important to the organization and a role it values greatly.

As mentioned previously, the pursuits to develop this project, along with a recent project to install a loop system for telecoils into the center's Main Stage Theater and accessible automatic door buttons on the front entrance, have positioned the center to receive recognition from the State of Massachusetts through the Mass Cultural Council's Universal Participation Initiative. With this designation the center has the opportunity and support to learn through educational events, continue to work with user/experts in future program planning, and fully embrace the commitment to institution-wide accessibility.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOUNDATION

The goals of the Please Touch the Art project parallel the mission of the Sasaki Foundation in many ways. In order to be a change agent within our mutual community, the Mosesian Center for the Arts needed to disregard its typical perception of how a visual art exhibition can be experienced by patrons and who the center may not be engaging with traditional exhibition practices. This principle directly relates to the Sasaki Foundation's mission of embracing vastly different points of view with the goal of discovering new opportunities for engagement when the formality of tradition is ignored. The collective impact that we all strive to impart on our community is achieved through the inclusive nature of this program.

NEXT STEPS

While the Mosesian Center will not be able to ensure that every exhibition moving forward will be multi-sensory, the center can make other considerations for exhibition programs to make them more inclusive. Accessible best practices for artwork and wall text installation will be maintained moving forward. Curatorial practices and conceptual considerations for exhibits will be made to ensure there are elements of each show that allow for more universal participation. The tools generated for general facility navigation, including audio guides, braille and large print text guides, and tactile maps, will continue to be accessible to visitors.



Patrons touching art | Matt Jatkola

SPONSOR ORGANIZATION

Located just six miles from Downtown Boston, The Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts (formerly the Arsenal Center for the Arts) is a vibrant multi-disciplinary community arts venue located in Watertown, Massachusetts. This 30,000 square-foot former US Army arsenal is home to the 380-seat MainStage Theater, the 100-seat Black Box Theater, exhibition galleries, two rehearsal halls, education classrooms, and resident artist studios. Offerings include visual and performing arts productions, classes and workshops for all ages, literary/art discussions, and world-class theatrical and musical performances. The Mosesian Center is home to the award-winning Watertown Children's Theatre as well as New Repertory Theatre, the Center's professional theatre company in residence.

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Please Touch the Art design charrette in the Incubator at Sasaki | Sasaki

RESEARCH TEAM



Aneleise Ruggles

Aneleise Ruggles is Director of Exhibitions at the Mosesian Center for the Arts. She has over 10 years of experience in visual arts programming and public engagement and holds a masters in arts administration from Boston University. She has established a strong commitment to community access and artistic enrichment.



Matt Jatkola

Matt Jatkola is Creative Services Manager at the Mosesian Center for the Arts. His position includes art handling and installation, graphic design and brand oversight, and program support. His deep institutional knowledge and passion for the arts in all disciplines makes him a vital team member on this project.



Georgina Kleege

Blind author and scholar Georgina Kleege teaches creative writing and courses on representations of disability in literature, as well as disability memoir, at the University of California, Berkeley. She has written several books on disability studies, including her most recent work, *More Than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art*.



Tanja Milojevic

Tanja Milojevic is Braille Production Specialist at the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library in Watertown, Massachusetts. Tanja attended Simmons College for English writing and minored in radio communications along with special education, moderate disabilities. She attended UMass Boston for her master's in vision studies.



Roberta Miller

Roberta Miller is Executive Director of the Mosesian Center for the Arts. She previously spent 25 years at a national consulting practice focused on multi-sector urban development initiatives. She also has served as a Watertown Town Council member, a Launchpad Venture Group member, a Watertown Arsenal Development Corporation member, and a Mosesian Center founding board member.



Karissa Coady

Karissa Coady is Community Engagement Coordinator at the Mosesian Center for the Arts. Her position includes managing the volunteer program, marketing and development work, programmatic support, and special projects. She brings together her passion for and knowledge of the intersections of art, access, and community in Please Touch the Art.

A Look Ahead



A LOOK AHEAD

In 2018, the launch of the Sasaki Foundation's Design Grants program allowed the Foundation to focus on bringing issues of inequity in design to the forefront, particularly in helping communities that have historically been removed from the design process. The research accomplished by the five teams in the program's inaugural cohort offers innovative solutions to address climate change, community identity, social inequities, housing affordability, and transportation, with an ongoing impact in Greater Boston and beyond.

A strong research agenda has allowed the Sasaki Foundation to maintain its leadership position with regard to cutting-edge technologies and concepts within design. For this year's Design Grants, the Foundation focused on communities within Greater Boston, as well as Massachusetts Gateway Cities like Lowell, Worcester, and Lynn, with the intent to expand our reach in the coming years.

The Sasaki Foundation aims to test new models and projects that can work within communities, with the goal of scaling these concepts to other communities with similar characteristics, in Greater Boston and across the nation. We have developed our research agenda through the lens of equity in design. In our inaugural year of the Design Grants program, the Foundation emphasized resiliency as it relates to challenges that adversely impact communities, including climate adaptation, housing, access to mobility choices, and creative community building.

"We are extremely impressed with and inspired by the work our inaugural Design Grants cohort was able to accomplish in the areas of climate, housing, mobility, and community in just nine months during their residency in the Incubator at Sasaki. All five teams have already made a visible impact in their communities, and are poised to further their impact in the coming months and years. We are excited to continue to co-create change through our growing research community," says Mary Anne Ocampo, Sasaki principal and Sasaki Foundation Board Chair.

As we move forward, the Sasaki Foundation Design Grants program will continue to bring new, local solutions to global challenges, empowering our communities and creating lasting change through the power of design.

◂ *Please Touch the Art | Sasaki*

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1. US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

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