When the People Lead: Building Equity Through Co-Design

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Design Impact

• Nonprofit social innovation firm that **believes design can combat systematic inequity**
• We work in partnership with mission-driven organizations to redesign the policies, systems, and programs that perpetuate inequity
Poverty and Health Disparities: ENSURING ALL CHILDREN THRIVE
Our Partner

Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) is ranked third in the nation by U.S. News Best Children's Hospitals
Context

- CCHMC is located in Avondale—one of Cincinnati’s most impoverished neighborhoods
- Nearly 40 percent of families in Avondale earn wages below the poverty line
- The rate of child poverty in Cincinnati is more than 44 percent; the fourth worst in the nation
- Poverty and poor health outcomes are inextricably linked
In Hamilton County (Cincinnati), 9.3 babies died for every 1,000 born in 2015. The national average is 5.8.
Goals of CCHMC

As part of CCHMC’s strategic plan for 2020, they are partnering with several organizations, agencies and individuals to work towards:

• Eliminating infant mortality
• Eliminating disparities across neighborhoods in children’s health
• Ensuring all 5 year olds have a “healthy mind and body”
• All children reading by third grade
Deep Community Engagement: CO-DESIGNING WITH COMMUNITY
The Approach

Design Impact was tasked with facilitating a human-centered design process to acquire a deep understanding of user needs, develop inspirational personas, identify key opportunity areas and generate potential solutions.
The Approach

What makes our HCD approach different?

• Many HCD approaches focus on interviews and personas to develop new ideas

• In our approach, peer researchers and community members from two of Cincinnati’s lowest-income neighborhoods were active participants in every stage of the design process: Discovery, Synthesis, Ideation, and Prototyping
Peer Research Model

- An approach that radically asserts that research should be done in partnership with community by leveraging community interest and knowledge to drive action and social change.
- Rooted in principles of equity and partnership.
Peer Research Model

Five mothers from Avondale and Price Hill:

- attended a two-day training on empathic interviewing
- co-designed our research guide
- co-interviewed parents in both communities and reflected on what we heard
- participated in photovoice research
- synthesized findings as part of a larger team (CCHMC staff, nonprofit organizations, community members)
- generated ideas and selected concepts for prototyping
Photovoice

- A group analysis method combining photography with grassroots social action
- Our peer researchers:
  - took photos related to health and wellness in their communities
  - gathered twice to collectively share out and make sense of their images
  - connected those images to their hopes and aspirations for their neighborhoods
Key Benefits of Co-Design

Citizen Empowerment

It creates the space for community members to play an active role in the process of saying what needs to be known about and done in their own communities.
Key Benefits of Co-Design

Deeper Research

It lowers the barriers between participants and researchers—a barrier which can keep participants from sharing the kinds of deep experiences that drive relevant design.
Key Benefits of Co-Design

Unheard Voices

It leverages community insider knowledge about and connections to often-excluded populations that our partner organizations often struggle to engage
Key Benefits of Co-Design

Improved Outcomes

It ensures that we generate culturally relevant solutions that are able to achieve the outcomes our partners seek.
Key Challenges of Co-Design

More Resources Required

Engaging peer researchers and community members throughout the process meant we needed to ensure they had access to transportation and child care, in addition to working around challenging schedules.
Key Challenges of Co-Design

Limited Innovation

The process is powerful for developing networks and giving voice to those that haven’t traditionally been given a voice, but it doesn’t always lead to deeply innovative concepts.
3. Moving Ideas to Action: WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Thank You