

Welcome from the USC Annenberg Innovation Lab and The Reef

From the onset, the USC Annenberg Innovation Lab (AIL) eagerly grasped the idea of reimagining the future of Downtown Los Angeles. Leveraging USC's central role in local economic and knowledge networks, as well as our unique partnership with The Reef's maker community, we were able to engage a diverse cross-section of thought leaders and community members to begin world building our collective future. We are especially grateful for the involvement of our colleagues, François Bar, Ann Pendleton-Jullian, Nicholas Busalacchi, Sonia Jawaid Shaikh, Jonathan Taplin, John Seely Brown, and Ava Bromberg, whose hard work and creativity made this possible. On behalf of AIL and The Reef, we proudly present to you the findings from the first phase of the DTLA Imagination Corridor World Building project.

Workshop participants

The following individuals participated in world building workshops and contributed their invaluable stories and design ideas to the process:

Moving workshop (December 12, 2014)

- Alison Kendall, KPD
- Aroussiak Gabrielian, USC School of Cinematic Arts
- Darryl Holter, Shamas Group
- David Sommers, LA Department of City Planning
- Deborah Murphy, Los Angeles Walks
- Jack Illes, Urban California
- Kristen Guth, USC Annenberg
- Matt Geller, SoCal Mobile Food Vendors Association
- Naomi Iwasaki, Community Health Councils
- Officer Ruben Vargas, Los Angeles Police Department
- Peter Falt, BMW DesignworksUSA
- Prof. Rachel Berney, USC School of Architecture
- Prof. Robert Hernandez, Annenberg Innovation Lab
- Rodney Mullen, Professional skateboarder and inventor
- Sahra Sulaiman, Streetsblog LA
- Tafarai Bayne, CicLAvia
- Tim Femaux, LA Department of City Planning

Making workshop (January 30, 2015)

- Adrian Bennington, Pros and Cons LA
- Amy Amsterdam, Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp
- Anne Bray, Freewaves
- Ben Caldwell, KAOS Network
- Cindy Patino, Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising
- Erin Reilly, Annenberg Innovation Lab
- Karl Baumann, USC School of Cinematic Arts
- Laurie Yehia, StudioEleven

Project team

- Prof. François Bar, USC Annenberg
- Prof. Ann Pendleton-Jullian, The Ohio State University Knowlton School of Architecture and Georgetown University
- Nicholas Busalacchi, USC Annenberg
- Sonia Jawaid Shaikh, USC Annenberg
- John Seely Brown
- Jonathan Taplin, Annenberg Innovation Lab
- Ava Bromberg, The Reef

- Matthew Miller, USC Price School of Public Policy
- Melani Smith, Melendrez
- Mya Stark, LA Makerspace
- Pati Zarate, Homegirl Cafe
- Prof. Denise Sandoval, Cal State Northridge
- Prof. Patti Riley, USC Annenberg School
- Prof. Rochelle Steiner, USC Roski School of Fine Arts
- Rudy Rude Martinez, Professional muralist
- Sal Sanchez, Professional photographer
- Sarah Myers-West, USC Annenberg

Living workshop (February 20, 2015)

- Alexander Hamden, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
- Alexandra Suh, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance
- Christy Hagen, USC Annenberg
- Claire Bowin, LA Department of City Planning
- Damon Turner, Black Lives Matter
- Deepak Bahl, USC Center for Economic Development
- Don Spivack, CRA/LA (former)
- Erick Lopez, LA Department of City Planning
- Florence Nishida, LA Green Grounds
- George Villanueva, USC Metamorphosis Project
- Jennifer Caspar, Mercado La Paloma
- Jeremy Quant, Downtown Art Walk
- Neelam Sharma, Community Services Unlimited
- Pete White, Los Angeles Community Action Network
- Prof. Curtis Roseman, USC Dornsife
- Theresa Hwang, Skid Row Housing Trust

Filming and support crew

- Kangxin (Silver) Yuan, USC Annenberg
- Jordyn Barber, USC School of Cinematic Arts
- Matthew Halla, USC School of Cinematic Arts
- Christina Jobe, USC School of Cinematic Arts

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Introduction

What you have in your hands...

...is a briefing book that recaps the first phase of world building workshops for the Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA) Imagination Corridor. This document highlights the design process, captures the conversations and sketches, and presents a framework for work to come. Think of this book as the jumping off point for a first dive into the world of the DTLA Imagination Corridor circa 2040. The first phase set the stage through its exploration of “what-if” provocations and unifying themes. The next phase will plunge into the world’s concrete and narrative possibilities.

Project goals

The primary goal for world building DTLA was to start a conversation about possible futures for the community and begin stitching together the social fabric around these visions. In one sense, the process is the product. We also set out to collaboratively develop a textured ‘encyclopedia’ that could guide future actions. These actions include interconnected interventions, projects, and curricula designed to prototype objects and conditions that might exist in the DTLA Innovation Corridor, bringing the imagined world in line with our current one. With community participation and cross-sectoral collaboration, we look forward to putting this system of actions into action.

The catalyst: MyFigueroa

Like many great ideas, the DTLA Imagination Corridor World Building initiative was born of frustration. The MyFigueroa project had been in the works for quite some time, promising to transform Downtown LA’s (DTLA) bustling Figueroa Corridor into a multi-modal street that welcomed pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders (and, of course, drivers). Funding had been secured, public meetings had been held, and the project seemed ready to go by the end of 2013. That is until several stakeholders, including the Exposition Park museums and USC, tentatively withdrew their support on account of traffic concerns.

Several key members of the the USC Annenberg Innovation Lab (AIL) feared that USC stood on the wrong side of this debate. As the eleventh hour drew near, we came up with a game-changing idea. As long as MyFigueroa remained framed as a trade-off between cars and bikes, politics would continue to bog down the project. Instead, a broader vision could cast MyFigueroa as the catalyst for an emerging “Imagination Economy” in contradistinction to Silicon Valley’s digital economy.

This vision helped AIL change the conversation and in March 2014, we published an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times’ framing MyFigueroa as more than just cars versus bikes (excerpt right). This op-ed influenced the opinions of USC’s administration and other stakeholders and, along with other factors, meant that in mid-2014, MyFigueroa was back on track. Soon, residents and

Is downtown L.A.’s Figueroa Corridor the next Silicon Valley? *Los Angeles Times*. March 18, 2014.

...Over the last 10 years, downtown L.A. had become vibrant as it built ties to the south, reaching USC and Exposition Park. From the Walt Disney Concert Hall to the California Science Center, a dynamic innovation corridor is taking shape around Figueroa Street. The corridor is home to world-class arts and culture venues, from the Walt Disney Concert Hall and the California African American Museum to Los Angeles government and civic institutions, including the Central Library. Premier media, entertainment and sports venues line Figueroa, from Staples Center and L.A. Live to the Coliseum and Galen Center. Diverse universities fulfill a variety of research and educational missions, including USC, Mount St. Mary’s College, Loyola Law School, the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising and L.A. Trade-Technical College. The Figueroa Corridor is teeming with community energy, innovative spirit, entrepreneurial drive, artistic vision, civic engagement and technological savvy. The list of entrepreneurial and artistic spaces is growing too quickly to list all of them, and that is precisely the point: the Figueroa Corridor is teeming with community energy, innovative spirit, entrepreneurial drive, artistic vision, civic engagement and technological savvy.

But the most dramatic change will only come once Figueroa is reinvented to facilitate the flow of people and break down fences. Innovation thrives on clusters: interconnected businesses, creativity across sectors and fluid jobs. Studies have shown how the economic power of business clusters is magnified when activities are linked. Downtown L.A. already has the key nodes: best-in-class businesses, universities and creative venues. All it needs now are the connections...

Future Shift
Melrose
Perceived

Connected
Affordable (30%?)
Sustainable
Healthy
Beautiful
Scaled
Accessible
FLEXIBLE
Quality housing options
available to everyone

CORRIDOR
ATTRACTS MANY
MORE LOW & MIDDLE
INCOME PEOPLE?
(AT LEAST ITS
FAIR SHARE)

visitors would be able to move around the corridor easily and safely using any mode of transport.

But the vision for an Imagination Economy did not end at mobility. DTLA is well-situated to become a hub of innovation centered around imagination. LA's blend of creativity, cultural diversity, and economic capacity perfectly positions the city to create a new model of innovation based on collective imagination.

World building the real-world

Following the publication of the Los Angeles Times op-ed, we held a meeting to brainstorm next steps. This led to an action plan for engaging stakeholders in community visioning and design through world building. The Reef, a 'creative habitat' in Downtown LA, generously sponsored this initiative and in May 2014, we launched the project during a public event at The Reef's Maker City LA maker space.

World building has a long history in fantasy and science fiction writing. More recently, production designers like Alex McDowell at USC's School of Cinematic Arts have adapted the practice to cinema and interactive arts. It is an inherently collaborative practice that pieces together textured, expansive, and coherent worlds from the contributions of many. The DTLA Imagination Corridor World Building Project marks the first time world building has been used to engage an urban community in designing its future.

The Figueroa Corridor of the near-future is a streetscape that encourages movement and encounter. The DTLA Imagination Corridor of 2040 will be a platform that knits together people, ideas, and culture, transforming how we live, make, and play through a rich network of connections. What if imagination were to fuel the transformation of DTLA in 2040? What might this look and feel like to people living and working there? How could we get there?

To answer these questions, we brought together a diverse group of experts and community members who had long been thinking about the past, present, and future of the area. Our task was to world build the DTLA Imagination Corridor in the Year 2040.

To kick off Phase I of this project, we held three workshops at The Reef focused on three domains: moving, making, and living. This Briefing Book captures the key ideas, themes, and "what-ifs" that came out of these workshops. In the next phase, we will work with additional thought leaders and community members to expand this work and develop rich narratives set in the DTLA Imagination Corridor of 2040.

What is the Imagination Economy?

- During the last part of 20th century, we have witnessed an important shift in information and communications technology. Coming from Silicon Valley myself, I recall a time not too long ago when we built geeky things and distributed them in massive numbers. Now we are in different times. We are in an era of networks, sensors, smart matter, transmedia, Uber, Kickstarter, and Airbnb. It seems fair to say the world we are living in is advancing at exponential speed, which as a result is challenging the status quo.
- This new era is one of creating contexts and experiences rather than producing the same thing over and over for mass consumption. But an important question is, "What is the purpose of building these contexts?" Perhaps to enhance emotional connections, serendipitous encounters, epiphanies and "aha!" moments in our everyday lives.
- To think we are living in this vast ecosystem called LA, with all its phenomenal richness surrounding us. How might we build digital bridges for people to access this richness?
- We have entered into a world of what-if and why-not. In some sense, if you can imagine it, why can't you do it?
- Our digital tools and networks are more democratized than ever before and present incredible possibilities. In this networked society, we are more limited by our imaginations than by our resources.
- Welcome to the imagination age—where everything from food to fashion to housing to the arts can be seen through the lens of what-if. We now have 3D printing, the internet of things, and radical new ways to construct green buildings. Cars not only roll from point A to point B, but are being thought of as computational platforms.
- There is so much more to come in this networked world, if only we let our imagination take us places we couldn't go before.

John Seely Brown

JSB is a Visiting Scholar at USC and Independent Co-chair of the Deloitte Center for the Edge. JSB was formerly Chief Scientist at Xerox Corporation and Director of its Palo Alto Research Center.

that actively supports
social connectivity &
inter-personal relations,
including resolving homelessness.

equitable
stable & sustained

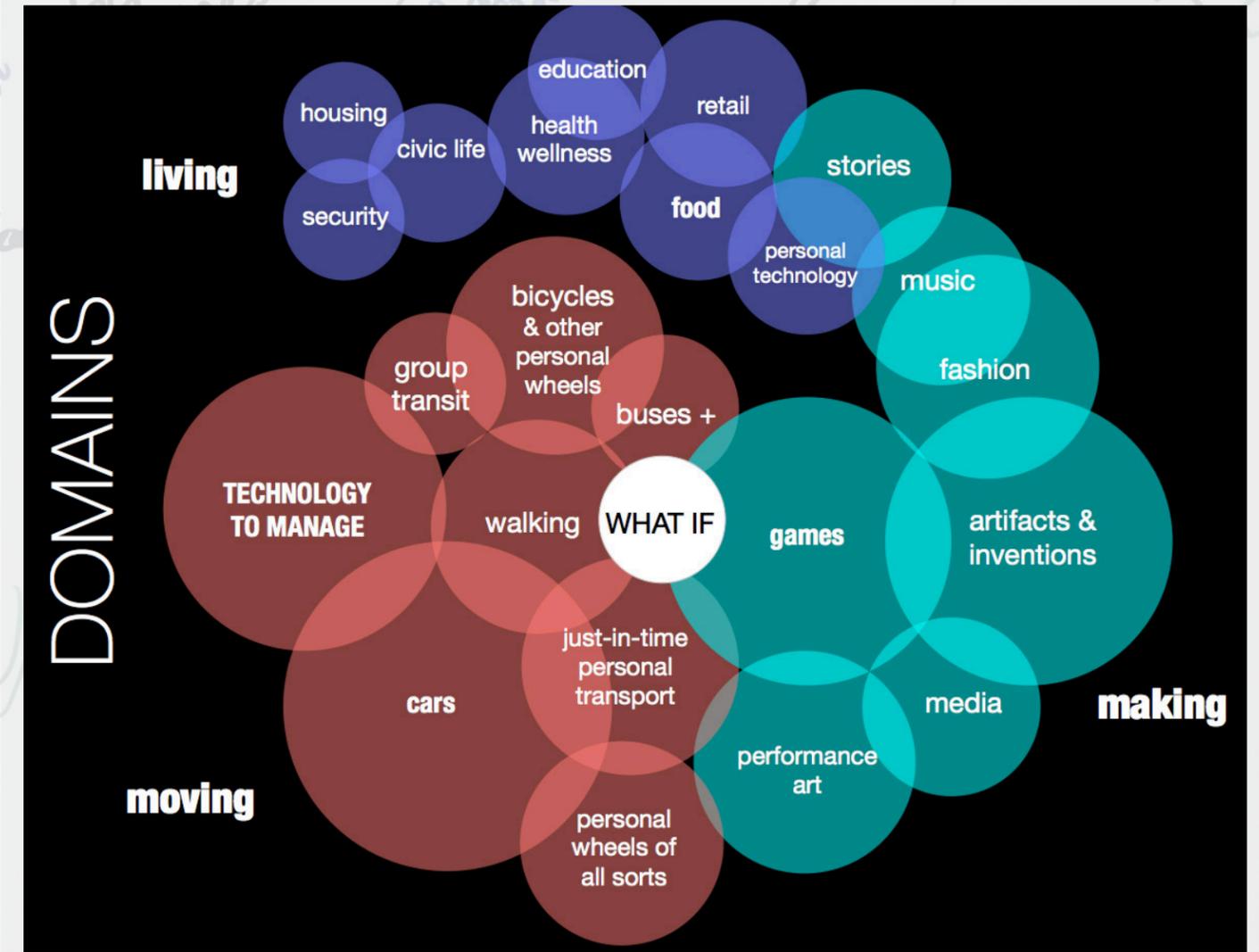
CULTURAL OUTREACH
COMMERCIAL
(PRESUMES AMOUNT
OF DISPOSABLE
INCOME)

FigCorr: nat'l & intern'l
model that provides quality housing options for all

General Project Area



Original Domain Map



The Process

Phase I Workshops

Between December 2014 and February 2015, the DTLA Imagination Corridor World Building Project hosted its Phase I workshops focusing on three domains: moving, making, and living. The purpose of these workshops was to engage a broad set of participants who had a stake in the corridor and valuable expertise that could inform how the area would evolve by the Year 2040. Their experience and knowledge spanned many facets of the current and future city, including housing and homelessness, food and health, diversity and connections, retail and manufacturing, and arts and culture. Participants engaged in design work that spanned all scales, from corridor-wide trends and visionary concepts to specific artifacts and conditions that one might encounter in this future.

Three domains, three workshops

At the beginning of the world building process, we framed the vision for the DTLA Imagination Corridor around three broad domains: moving, making and living. We then organized one workshop for each domain and invited a diverse cross-section of experts and community leaders to collectively envision the future.

Moving



Description

- Movement of people, goods and resources encompassing both conventional and non-conventional modes of transportation and moving-related sub-cultures

Examples

- Buses, light rail, bikes, skateboards, bike-modding, low riders, food trucks, running clubs, car share, transportation network companies, autonomous cars, electric vehicles

World building defined

World building is a practice borrowed from cinematic production design that leads to the development of an imagined world where numerous characters and narratives might cross paths. The process brings together and mines a diverse collection of imaginations. It asks them to envision aspects of the future and then weaves these visions into a textured and coherent world that one can imagine inhabiting. It engages people from all walks of life to brainstorm the future, creating understanding, resonance, and shared direction between participants. Like our own world, these imagined worlds are rich because of their diversity. While the end product must make sense as a whole, there is room for divergent visions and contradictions. It is this messiness that makes it something we can see, feel, and envision being part of. Because we can imagine these places being real, we can work towards making them so.

Making



Description

Production activities broadly defined, ranging from smart manufacturing to the maker movement to digital media production

Examples

Crafting, filmmaking, music production, interactive arts, mural painting, fashion, culinary arts, 3D printing, aerospace manufacturing

Components

There are four components to world building that together create “a whole range of viable and not so viable possibilities tangible and available for consideration.”¹ These include defining an origin story, articulating logic points, spanning horizontally, and diving vertically.

Component 1: Origin story

Every story needs a beginning, just like every world needs an origin story. Whether Adam & Eve or the Big Bang, an origin story sets in motion a chain of events that defines a world’s natural, cultural, and social dynamics. In world building, origin stories often come out of **what-ifs**—big, speculative questions that create a center of gravity for all other questions.

¹ Dunne, A. & Raby, F. (2013). *Speculative everything: Design, fiction and social dreaming*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Living



Description

Housing and the practice of everyday life for residents and visitors to the DTLA Imagination Corridor. The experience of the city and the daily cycle of live, work, and play.

Examples

Arts and culture; diversity and connections; food and health; housing and homelessness; and retail and manufacturing

For example, in Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*, Alex McDowell's production design team started with the question: "If you had the ability to foresee crime, what would the world around that look like?"

The prompting what-if question for this project was "What if imagination were to fuel the transformation of Downtown Los Angeles in 2040?"

We began with a more general what-if prompt that participants could riff on to develop their own origin stories and scaffold their collective brainstorming. This prompt was the driving force behind the project and informed the world building process from start to finish.

Component 2: Logic points

The what-if question helps frame the world building process, but without clear boundaries the problem space can seem overwhelming. To bring the world into sharper focus, assumptions and creative constraints called **logic points** need to be established. Not all assumptions are equal. Some drive and some follow. Some set the process in motion while others play it out.

Again in *Minority Report*, a critical logic point was that pre-cogs—individuals who could "see" future crimes—had a vision range of 50 miles from central Washington D.C. This meant that masses of people moved into the safe urban zone creating a dense, vertical city. This logic point initiated questions around transportation that then

cascaded through vehicles, housing, security, technology, and numerous other design domains.

During the DTLA Imagination Corridor workshops, we asked groups to collaboratively brainstorm logic points that would then frame their imagined world. To kickstart the process, participants shared stories about their fears for the future and a cool new thing or experience. Since world building is a narrative-driven process, we used stories to avoid analytical observations or explanations of concepts, and instead capture the texture of issues and experiences in their contexts. During the third workshop (living), pre-selected participants also shared more detailed 'anchor stories' about their sub-domain of expertise (e.g., housing and homelessness or retail and manufacturing).

These stories presented the current context of DTLA and produced important considerations and logic points. Since this project was set in a real place, it was crucial to make sure the world of the future was not divorced from reality. While world building offers an opportunity to look past some of today's more nitty-gritty constraints, the DTLA Imagination Corridor still had to make sense with the area's embedded cultural and social dynamics. For example, imagining the future of DTLA without taking into account homelessness would have been both incoherent and misinformed.

What if the DTLA Imagination Corridor in 2040 is...

Groups riffed off the project's original what-if question to develop what-if's of their own. These questions framed their brainstorming process and set their imagined worlds in motion.

Workshop 1 (Moving)

- ...a flexible meeting space that fosters diversity in both physical and idea making?
- ...the spine of the region connecting all the major destinations and attractions?
- ...a system of public spaces as a sustainable, unified metabolic system like a river?
- ...a re-creation of local community with living, playing and making at its center?
- ...a place where walking is the new driving and feet are the coolest way to get around?

Workshop 2 (Making)

- ...more human and focused on housing, mobility, food, education, affordability, community, and health care?
- ...in the midst of catastrophe and couldn't go elsewhere for help?
- ...a continuous central green space that organizes a wide range of community resources?
- ...a place where we have cleaned up and made the best version of what we already have?
- ...a platform for exchanging everything from culture to products to social services?

Workshop 3 (Living)

- ...a place that has made water its main concern?
- ...an equitable social ecosystem supported by universal access to information and "the code," which connects every individual to cultural, economic, political, and social possibilities?
- ...a safe space that solves all privacy issues?
- ...a model for eradicating homelessness?
- ...empowering, innovative, informative, adaptable, exploration-oriented, equitable, enjoyable, adaptable, intelligent, supportive, accessible, connecting, non-invasive, and efficient?

Assumptions and logic points

From the many ideas, narratives, themes and questions that were either articulated or implied in the charrettes, we collated a series of assumptions and considerations as seen through five lenses.

Material lens

- California has capped water usage at 2015 levels
- In an effort to reduce citywide temperatures, the city has mandated that all residential and commercial buildings have publicly accessible green roofs
- The city has passed a district-level energy neutrality initiative—i.e., energy consumption must match energy production
- Due to skyrocketing health care costs and concern for its citizens, California has implemented an aggressive incentive system around personal health and wellness

Technological lens

- Information technology is ubiquitous
- Big data has transformed the street into a platform that senses and manages performance, maintenance, security, environmental impacts, and more
- Machine-to-machine technology (the Internet of Things) means the street, buildings, and transportation are all fully connected
- Public objects create a hybridity of “real” and virtual that can be experienced by both internal and external users

Social lens

- DTLA is not just an exclusive enclave for the wealthy creative class
- Living, working, and recreation have intermixed due to technological disruptions and affordances. Zoning laws and policies have changed to reflect this.
- The definition of family has broadened and living arrangements have adapted accordingly
- A new socioeconomic system has evolved around sharing human and physical resources

Cultural lens

- DTLA is known for its diversity
- DTLA is a destination for work, entertainment, and culture
- The street is a central information exchange for things happening along it and in adjacent neighborhoods
- People can play with the street and not just in the street

Work lens

- The corridor is an open system of innovation built around imagination and creativity
- Bigger, consolidated organizations dominate industry
- Networked work and the sharing economy have atomized services and production activities. Every home can be a factory and every person a “maker.”
- Manufacturing jobs have greatly decreased but increased in service, creative, and thought-heavy industries

Component 3: Spanning horizontally

Like the real-world, imagined worlds must be expansive and represent a broad cross-section of domains and sub-domains that shape characters’ lives. This could range from physics to food to space travel to biotextiles. These domains become areas of inquiry, where one asks “what would X be like?” given the origin story and logic points.

Domains and **sub-domains** are often mapped out as interdependent circles to identify linkages, intersectionalities, and missing pieces of the world. It is important to note that world building need not be comprehensive—one does not have to map out or work within all possible domains. More important is that the world is coherent and that domains relate to each other in a way that makes sense. Coherence makes the world plausible.

We began spanning horizontally when we identified themes and participants for the Phase I workshops. Within the main domains of moving, making, and living, we mapped out sub-domains that would be important to explore. We then extended invitations to stakeholders that could speak knowledgeably about these areas.

During the workshops, these domains provided a starting point only. Participants also explored other areas of inquiry as they emerged during the design process. In groups of five, they had ‘conversations with pens’ on paper-covered walls—each person with a different

colored marker to capture diverse and divergent ideas. Together (and occasionally apart!), they mapped and sketched the expanse of the DTLA Imagination Corridor based on their what-ifs and the logic points they had identified.

Component 4: Diving vertically

Whereas spanning horizontally maps a world’s range from the top, diving vertically explores it in detail, linking themes, assumptions and larger questions to real qualities and characteristics. This often takes the form of **stories** and **artifacts**. It’s one thing to say that autonomous vehicles will be a reality in the DTLA Imagination Corridor. It’s another to narrate this as a child playing in the street or an escaped convict evading the police. In the process of telling possible stories, one tests the plausibility and coherence of the world. One explores the world ‘as if’ it were real.

Artifacts are material things that could exist in this world and range from grand to mundane. In world building, there is value placed on ‘diegetic objects,’ or objects that reveal a lot about the world without having to narrate or explain. Often, the most mundane artifacts tell the most about a world. For example, a transit pass might help showcase the technology and transportation options of a world, as well as reveal clues about surveillance and social inclusion or exclusion.

Stories and artifacts not only serve as prototypes for plausibility and coherence, but they also infuse texture into imagined worlds. These are the things that make a world seem real, inhabitable, and achievable.

The Phase I workshops were primarily focused on spanning horizontally, with Phase II designed to dig deeper into possible stories and artifacts. Despite this, groups in all three workshops found it helpful to sketch the concrete properties of the DTLA Imagination Corridor. In the third workshop, we explicitly asked participants to come up with artifacts during the latter half of the design charrette. Their ideas included computer code that networked people and programs together in an equitable social ecosystem, a museum exhibit of a (now extinct) homeless encampment, and smart glasses that enabled people to see and experience what they want in the streets, among others.

Comparing methods

- World building is like **community design** in that it engages diverse stakeholders—invaluable voices with embedded experience, knowledge, and insights—around a design problem. But unlike community design, it also engages with critical domain experts as designers, not consultants. And in addition to specific tactical and strategic ‘solutions’ to existing problems, it imagines a desired world beyond incremental change and then asks how we close the gap from here to there. World building is not about consensus building, but weaving diversity into a coherent whole.
- World building is like **scenario planning** in that it projects a viable future that we can imagine inhabiting because of its story-like properties. But unlike scenario planning, its focus is not limited to playing out foreseeable trends and constraints to address a specific problem. World building honors trends and constraints, but expands the problem space to explore how possible actions and decisions interact with the “realities” of an imagined world.
- World building is like **surrealist methods** in that it scaffolds an ongoing process of emerging visions within a collaborative “safe space.” It engages with elements of serendipity and play to shock the group out of simple problem solving. But unlike these methods, it specifically aims to design a viable future and focuses play around topics people have experiential and emotional equity in.

workshop 1: moving

In 3-person groups, each participant tells a short story about (1) a fear for the future; and (2) a cool thing or idea. Each group curates 3 stories to share.

workshop 2: making

no change

workshop 3: living

plus: asked 5 pre-selected participants to tell “anchor stories” to contextualize the corridor’s past and present

evolution of the storytelling process

Part 1: Brainstorm what-if questions to frame the world
Part 2: Sketch out textured visions from these what-ifs

Part 1: Span horizontal and brainstorm domains
Part 2: Dive vertical and add texture to these domains

Part 1: Think horizontally about a pre-assigned domain
Part 2: Brainstorm what-ifs and logic points for this domain
Part 3: Create artifact that brings together ideas from Parts 1 and 2

evolution of the design charrette

What Emerged

DTLA Imagination Corridor circa 2040

The three world building workshops laid the foundation for thinking about the DTLA Imagination Corridor in the Year 2040. The conversations and sketches shared among the workshops' diverse participants revealed a future world where resilience is hard-wired into the neighborhood, transparency and privacy issues loom larger than ever, and diversity is triumphing over cultural convergence. In this world, the street is a platform for exchange and interaction, and tensions between local and global persist despite a strong emphasis on localization. Static land use regulations have been cast aside for more flexible and scaled zoning, and the notion of the collective has taken on much greater importance in designing infrastructure, information technology solutions, and institutions.

This section is designed to place you inside the DTLA Imagination Corridor circa 2040. Read it as if the themes presented were already reality. The narratives at the end hint at the concrete possibilities that await in this future.

Themes

Resilience

With water, food, and energy resources facing increasing scarcity, residents and businesses have embraced principles of resilience to enhance local resource production and conservation. These adaptations have helped the DTLA Imagination Corridor thrive despite climate and resource shocks that have plagued other communities globally.

The metaphor of 'metabolism' governs infrastructure networks within this green corridor, resulting in highly efficient loops of production and consumption activities. The water one uses to shower cascades through dedicated pipes to local agricultural and aquaponic uses. Waste is turned into fertilizer or composted to harvest methane fuel. Kinetic courts capture energy from a pick-up basketball game, channeling it into a corridor-wide power grid.

Despite its emphasis on integrated production and consumption systems, the DTLA Imagination Corridor is no closed loop. Local and extra-local activities link up through big-data enabled networks, creating bridging opportunities both within and without. Production is scaled for an array of diverse suppliers to feed into the system. Parkway gardeners and vertical farm operators connect with consumers and each other in real-time to synchronize production and delivery.

Transparency and privacy

As one moves through the DTLA Imagination Corridor, a hidden digital infrastructure monitors the streetscape and those within it. Sensors track the city's mechanics in real-time, documenting everything from vehicle traffic and water consumption to economic transactions and recreational activities. These systems keep resources flowing efficiently through the corridor and enable data-enhanced forms of collaboration like co-working, sharing, and participatory policy making. Residents instantly check up on the health of the corridor through augmented reality devices and track their impact on the environment. This network society has broken down many barriers to information flow and precipitated a shift toward collectivism.

Despite these clear advantages, residents are constantly vigilant about transparency and privacy issues. For every new application promising "smarter" infrastructure, residents' activities can be tracked at even finer-grained detail. As each barrier to information flow is removed, new asymmetries are discovered and exploited.

Corridor stakeholders passionately advocate for their interests at three distinct levels. The first level relates to infrastructure transparency: Who should control the architecture of the corridor's digital infrastructure (e.g., City government? Corporations? Non-profits? Residents?) And for what purpose? The second level concerns flows of data over this infrastructure: Who should be allowed to own what data and how should

its visibility and use controlled? Finally, the third level involves the relationship between the physical and the virtual: How can physical objects (e.g., buildings, streetscapes, street furniture, etc.) be designed to make the invisible digital infrastructure visible and empower residents to meaningfully interact with their city?

Connections rather than convergence

Instead of passively allowing financial capital to recast the area in the image of a privileged few, the DTLA Imagination Corridor actively incentivizes and celebrates diversity of culture, socioeconomic status, and land use. Shared spaces, digital infrastructure, and civic and social organizations create bridging ties between diverse communities. Enclaves of expression form distinct cultural nodes throughout the corridor, but instead of being walled off, their shared interactions create a crossfading of cultures².

Mixing guides development in the corridor: income mixing; land and building use mixing; modal mixing in transportation design; scale mixing in housing and commercial development; and cultural mixing in public space design. Streetscapes are designed not only as conduits for movement, but also as spaces of play and learning. A vibrant array of local media outlets and community events knits together the civic and social fabric. Residents “hack” the corridor with community gardens, plazas, and pocket parks, creating a continuous mesh of publicly accessible space.

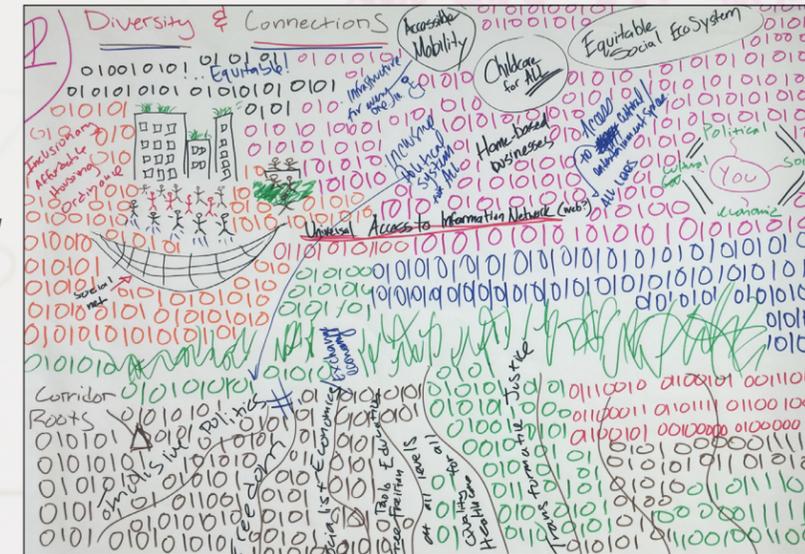
Exchange platforms for interaction

In the DTLA Imagination Corridor, people exchange their expertise, skills, ideas, and resources through physically and digitally enabled transaction platforms. Public spaces are configured to maximize opportunities for encounter. The bus stop is not only a shelter to board transit, but also a place for collective learning and interaction. One might wait for the 81 bus while remixing a public Minecraft map with others on the shelter façade. The curbside bench is a place to connect with other tired people in the corridor, but it is also a virtual portal to a streetscape in Shanghai or Rio De Janeiro. These multipurpose designs encourage contact with others and facilitate the transfer of ideas.

The physical and the virtual are often inseparable in this world, enabling exchanges of every conceivable kind. Affordable housing projects offer residents the option of foregoing rent by providing community services within the corridor instead. Digital networks and co-working spaces make it easy for small-scale makers to transact with consumers and other businesses. The ‘Internet of Things’ and publicly-owned data management platforms have been game changers for the sharing economy, making peer-to-peer exchange hyper-efficient and more equitable.

Kun, J. & J. Period. (2013). The art of the crossfade. TEDx PCC.

“The code” connecting every individual to cultural, economic, political, and social possibilities



Local-global tension

Instead of re-inventing the wheel, residents of the DTLA Imagination Corridor build on their many existing assets. There is a strong focus on ‘localization’ and investment is circulated and recirculated through the local economy. This reinforces the area’s core competencies and enables the community to build resilience through new strengths. Efforts are made to minimize dependence on resource imports and when imports are necessary, they augment existing supplies and are recycled internally. Community organizations, media players, and civic institutions work exceptionally hard to weave tight-knit social networks locally, exponentially increasing opportunities for encounter and knowledge transfer.

Residents, businesses, and institutions in the corridor also have a strong outward orientation. They recognize the importance of extra-local and global ties to the area’s continued prosperity. Opportunities for global exchange are seemingly endless, ranging from partnerships with foreign cultural and education institutions to virtual, real-time portals throughout the streetscape. Local economic clusters—including entertainment, fashion, manufacturing, and technology—leverage the corridor’s centrality in transportation and information networks to export their products and services worldwide. Global financial capital is embraced, but carefully regulated and channeled into investments that benefit the community equitably.



Groups having “conversations with pens” during the design charrette

Re-balancing individual versus collective

In the DTLA Imagination Corridor, there is a strong emphasis on collective needs in the design of physical spaces and virtual platforms. Instead of filtering the world to individual tastes and favoring individual goals, incentives and rewards are structured to pursue collective aims. The whole neighborhood receives rewards when a group of community members reduces their carbon or water footprint, often in the form of amenities that can be enjoyed collectively like park equipment and digital subscriptions for the library. Publicly owned data management platforms enable a different kind of ‘sharing economy’ that equitably distributes the benefits of peer-to-peer exchange among all participants.

These structures knit people together and nurture collaborative behavior, making it a little bit easier and a little more pleasurable to live, work, and play with others in the city.

Flexible, reconfigurable, and transformative space

In the DTLA Imagination Corridor, static land use regulations have been overhauled to accommodate economic, social, and technological changes. Data management platforms allow planners to rapidly manipulate building and zoning codes in real-time to react to changes in the environment. Land and building uses are flexible, interactive, and scaled to promote experimentation and social encounter.

Dynamic regulations mean that vacant or underutilized space is immediately put to use for community welfare and rapid prototyping. Inactive sections of sidewalk become temporary homes for interactive street furniture and performance art. Parking spots are re-purposed on weekends as pop-up parklets or mini-maker spaces. Vacant land is provisionally set-aside for food production and other community uses, without risk to the owner for liability.

Space is scaled both physically and temporally in the DTLA Imagination Corridor. Physically scaled spaces enable a range of flexible residential, commercial and public uses, including street-facing micro-retail stores, a greenway of parklets, and large-scale live-work collaboratives. Occupancy is temporally scaled to give users the option to perform for an hour, vend for a week, live for a month, or make for a year (and any combination thereof!).

Narratives

The following narratives showcase some of the design concepts that groups explored in depth. All of these ideas integrate with two or more themes. As textured stories, they force us to confront the internal logic of our themes and identify points of intersection, conflict, and further exploration.

Metabolic river

A river winds through the DTLA Innovation Corridor, complete with rapids, rocks and swirling eddies. While

metaphor, the river embodies the corridor in 2040: a metabolic system, producing and expending resources and continuously changing course to accommodate life. This is no ordinary streetscape, rigidly arraying cars and buses and bikes and people. No, this street adapts throughout the day to welcome its myriad users, from autonomous vehicles to street vendors selling paletas. Traffic is smartly routed and recreational nooks are revealed during off-peak hours. The street blends seamlessly with the sidewalk to uncover continuous open space that privileges none and accommodates all. Solar panels line the rooftops, mobile methane plants process organic waste, and kinetic energy is harvested — all providing power to passing vehicles and local homes and businesses.

The code

‘The code’ is a universally accessible information network that nourishes an equitable social ecosystem connecting every individual to cultural, economic, political, and social possibilities. Diversity thrives in all of its texture because the code connects people to resources equitably and to each other for living, working, and playing.

The corridor has new roots: politics are inclusive; freedom is a value that is shared by everyone; and home businesses and an economy of exchanges thrive. Education is accessible to all at all levels. Children are cared for. Justice is transforming. There is quality healthcare for all. People participate in all aspects of culture. The code knits together and scaffolds these

connections, and provides the community with full access and control of their data.

Local shark tank

Who needs angel investors on reality television when you've got passionate community members and local entrepreneurs? Local Shark Tank is like the Reddit of urban innovation — residents and stakeholders submit their ideas and the community up-votes those they like best. Local government facilitates permitting for the best idea(s) and community members chip in their time and energy to make it happen. Want to convert that vacant lot into an aquaponics garden? Local Shark Tank. How about turning that under-utilized nub of a street into a parklet for street vendors? Local Shark Tank! Projects are funded through a small local assessment and voluntary crowdfunding, with contributors having an equity share in any revenue-producing interventions.

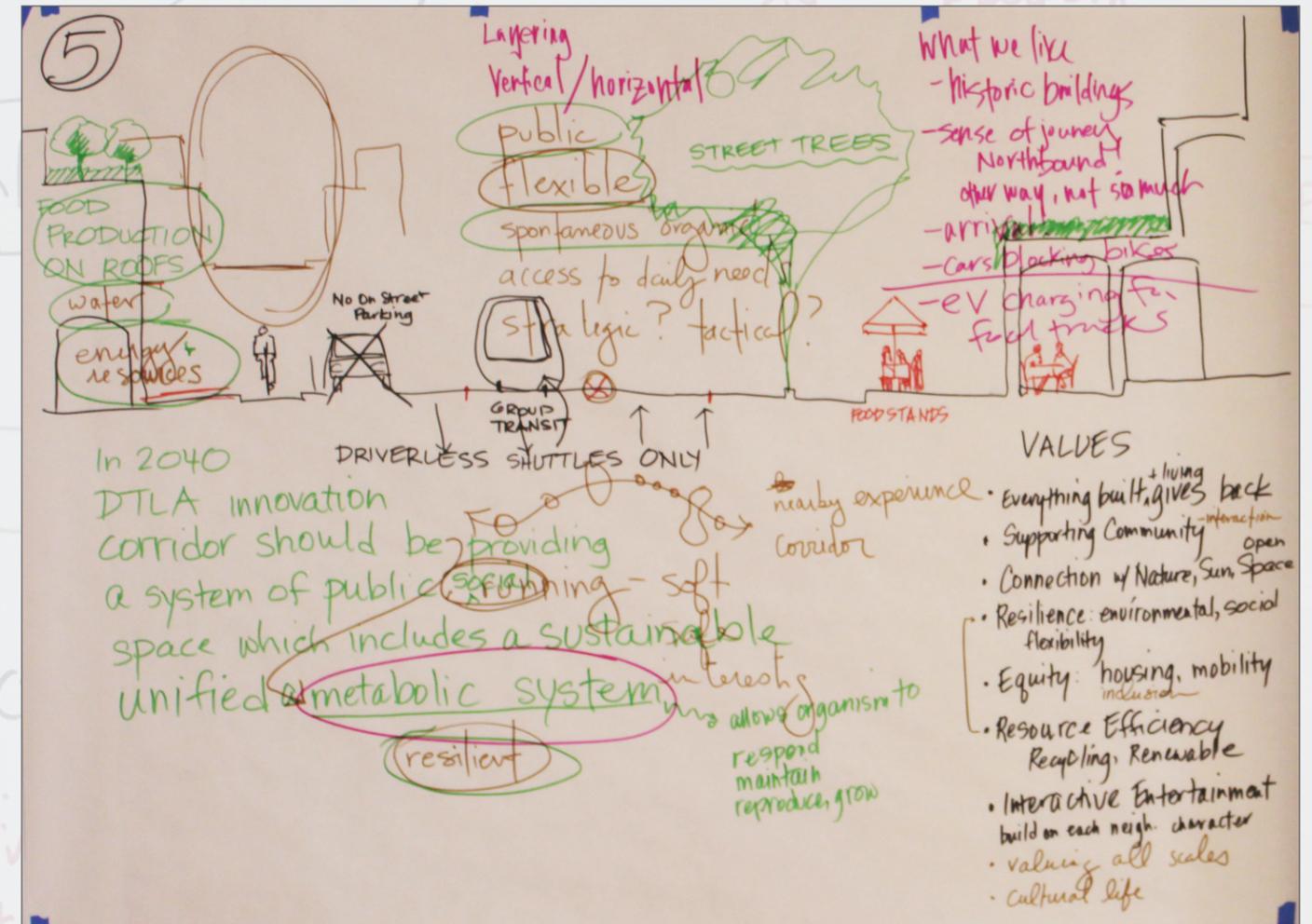
Self-sustaining, currency-less corridor

Modern urban needs and digital infrastructure have merged with the ancient barter system to give rise to a corridor without currency. In this intricate exchange network, the contribution of expertise and skills is algorithmically linked to goods and services in other sectors like transportation, housing, health, and food. Basic needs and baseline levels of employment are guaranteed. The system is highly adaptable to respond to minute shifts in supply and demand, and collective goals and resilience-oriented strategies are prioritized.

Spine of LA

The DTLA Imagination Corridor is the spine that connects individuals, organizations, products, and information at multiple scales. Centrally located at the nexus of regional and global networks, its ties branch out to others through roadways, fiber optics, pipes, and power lines. This facilitates collaboration, coordination of service delivery, and detection of conflicts at the systems level. Locally, 'Big Data' dashboards track building efficiency and reallocate urban space in real-time. At the regional level, resources flow through corridor's central conduits and control centers out to surrounding communities via smart grids. Data management platforms sync local production with internal and external demand, responding in real-time to economic fluctuations locally and globally.

'Metabolic River' taking shape



Next Steps

What's next?

The first three workshops represented Phase I of the DTLA Imagination Corridor World Building project. The themes, narratives, what-if questions, and assumptions presented in this Briefing Book represent the culmination of that process and set the agenda for Phase II. These elements will become part of the final DTLA Imagination Corridor 'encyclopedia.' Moving forward, we will engage additional experts, thought leaders, and community members to add depth and texture to the futures already outlined.

Phase II will consist of two integrated pieces that build on previous work and on each other. The first component will be a set of workshops that translate the findings from Phase I into artifacts—i.e., concrete objects or conditions—that could exist in this future. These artifacts are intended to be tangible cross-sections of the themes discussed in this book, and groups will think about them at four levels: (1) physical; (2) technological; (3) social; and (4) policy. The second component will be a set of interviews and convenings that bring together forward-thinking, subject matter experts. These individuals will help fill in the gaps and add coherence to the idea of a world fueled by imagination.

Ultimately, we will assemble this work in an 'encyclopedia' and develop a set of transmedia products and built artifacts to prototype the world. We intend for this to live on as an ever-evolving collective project, with multi-disciplinary studios and community groups continuously adding texture and putting this vision into action in the real-world.

Housing and Homelessness

Prototype museum exhibit of former homeless encampment, which no longer are needed in 2040



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