



Pushing Design Research into Implementation

NYPD's "People's Precinct" Action Research Set

Introduction. From October 2014 to August 2016, Town+Gown developed and supported several design-research projects in connection an initiative of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) to transform New York's police precincts into "people's precincts," using the 73 Precinct in Brownsville as the case study project.¹ In Los Angeles, the "peoples' precincts" program, in its most basic physical form, consists of two elements: (a) an ATM machine and (b) a community space where members of the community and the police precinct staff are able to engage in joint programming, both of which are located in the space between the front door of the precinct building and the sergeant's desk where police work takes place. Since DOP's NeON program was expressed as a service design effort in the criminal justice area, it served as a touchstone for the Town+Gown family of projects with NYPD, standing for the proposition of engaging in co-design as early as possible during the design process. In addition, a joint architecture/construction management building information modeling-enabled class with Pratt Institute/School of Architecture (Pratt/Architecture) that used "off-the-shelf" pre-fabricated building components to create a "kit of parts" program for temporary facilities in which to locate a variety of City post-disaster services, served as the additional touchstone for the architecture projects.

Implementing these two "people's precinct" elements at the 73 Precinct would signal a change of policy intent in a physical space, which had been constructed in 1985 in the fortress style common to that period, aimed at improving community police relations. The "as built" condition of the building, however, created an obstacle to creating a community space within it. Several design research projects focused on the attempt to turn the 73 Precinct into "people's precincts".

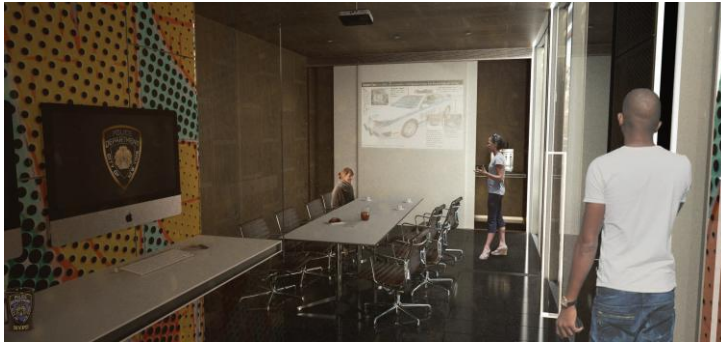
For *The People's Precinct at the 73*, Pratt/Architecture developed a three-semester series of classes, from Spring 2015 to Fall 2015, that was intended to explore community engagement, design and technical innovation and fully integrated project delivery in the form of a team-based design build effort that included students. The three seminar courses, which incorporated building information modeling tools, were structured conceptually along the lines of Yale University's design-build studio sequence, were intended to go from design (spring) to

estimation/specification (summer) to build (fall), culminating in a student-involved build of the student-designed structure (fall). The Yale program, initiated in 1967 by Charles W. Moore, required design students to get out of the studio to build the projects they designed so that they would not only be inspired by the mechanics of building during design but also develop a practice of positive social action by building for those underserved by design services.

In *The People's Precinct at the 73—Design of the Community Connection Pavilion*, the architectural solution revealed itself as a moveable free-standing modular structure that could be placed somewhere on the sidewalk surrounding the front of the building and later moved to other precincts over time to test the “People's Precinct” model across the City (the CCP pod). NYPD's desire to create a community room at a space-challenged location, created the opportunity to provide a new “front door” for the fortress-style building where the entrance to the building was hard to see from the sidewalk as well as explore the targeted and temporary use of pre-fabricated modular design and construction to address the City's systemic capital funding issues that tend to favor full rehabilitation or new construction for older buildings.

Specific design elements of the CCP pod reflected stakeholder input and included: the necessary balance between public accessibility and security for NYPD staff, with a transparent entry fitted with ballistic glass; an external neighborhood-specific identity able to utilize different local artists' work and balance day lighting and users' needs for privacy; an informative and welcoming reception area with space for an electronic “bulletin board”, with a welcome desk to be staffed by community liaison officers, and an interior able to accommodate computer stations for residents to search police-related information, space for the ATM, a public restroom, and flexible meeting and conference space to support a variety of police-community uses; practical and durable systems and materials intended to require minimal maintenance and years of service; and, finally, fast deployment and flexible use at multiple sites.





In the summer semester, work study students with one of the Pratt professors from the spring semester project in his office conducted *The People's Precinct at the 73—Technical Specification and Estimation of the Community Connection Pavilion*, which was a technical specification and estimation exercise applied to the CCP pod designed the previous semester. The student team used building information modeling (BIM) programs, assuming a computer numerical control production process and offsite pre-fabrication. BIM supports greater use of off-site fabrication and modular construction, including using manufactured products. BIM use has the potential to increase integration of design with constructability analysis during the early stages of a project, minimizing the need to resolve questions of the design when construction commences and related delays and additional costs; to permit materials requisition on an “as needed” basis, reducing costs associated with traditional stockpiling of materials on site; and, to increase labor productivity in construction. While this project was nearing completion, a decision was made to subject the entire Peoples' Precinct initiative—in the broader context of a community policing initiative—to an overall service design analysis, in addition to other analyses, delaying any decision with respect to the final build of the CCP pod academic demonstration project until completion of a service design analyses.² A form of “action” did, however, occur when, earlier in the spring, NYPD decided to include a community space and ATM in the design of the new City-funded building for the 40th precinct in The Bronx, then in the design phase at the New York City Department of Design and Construction.³

An ATM machine had been delivered to the vestibule of the 73 during Spring 2015, and has been in use since then. During Summer 2015, experiential learning students from New York School of Interior Design conducted *The People's Precinct at the 73—Interior Redesign of the Vestibule*. The crenelated building front of the building created a vestibule space that was not only oddly shaped but also small, with small transom windows at the top of the exterior walls providing the only natural light and dark ceramic tiles covering the walls; a small number of standard City-procured chairs; and, an officer's window near the interior door that provided neither privacy to visitors with inquiries or complaints nor comfort to the officer stationed

there and, when lines formed, inhibited free flow from the entrance to the door leading to the sergeant's desk.

The student-led research team in this four-week summer experiential learning seminar was tasked with developing interior design options for the vestibule at the 73rd precinct as well as a palette of options useable in vestibules in other precincts to support NYPD's roll-out of the ATM-machine component of the "People's Precinct" program across the City, all of which were intend to convey a sense of welcome and information. Following a user-centered design research methodology, the research team conducted four structured design meetings with the staff at the 73 and members of the Community Precinct Council to create two related designs—the first to be a simple design, constrained by cost and the physical space limitations at the 73rd Precinct, and the second to articulate a "civic standard" palette of design features that could be applied to spaces across NYPD's inventory of existing buildings. The design for the 73rd Precinct vestibule reflected the physical space limitations and provided for improved lighting and made small changes to an interior non-load bearing wall to increase privacy for those speaking to an officer at the reception desk, shielding the arrestee intake space from the view of visitors and improving traffic flow at the interior door. The materials chosen reflected operational needs for durability and ease of maintenance, and the colors chosen lightened the interior space that received only small amounts of natural light during the day. The design also included exterior signage to clearly identify the entrance and coordinated with the interior design features pointing to the ATM machine located in the corner of the vestibule. The team also designed signage specifically for the ATM to be used on the exterior or in the interior.





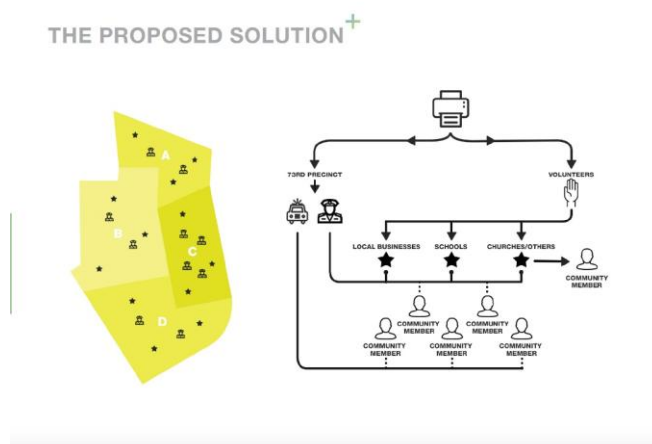
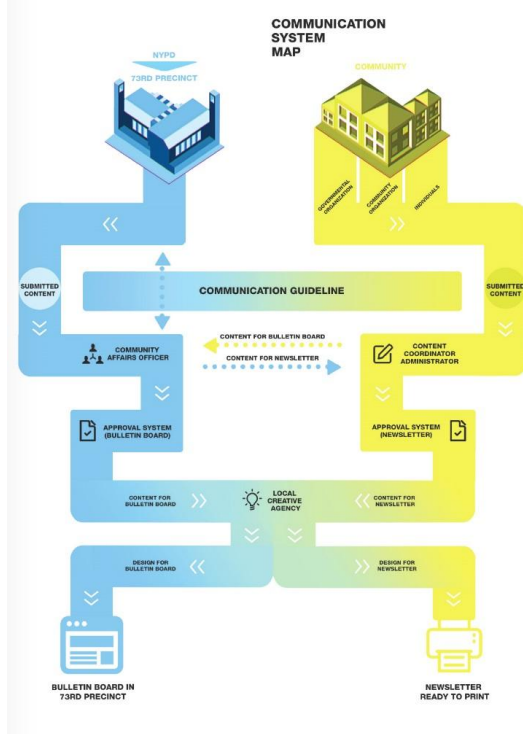
The vestibule redesign also included space for an electronic bulletin board to provide useful information, including information tied to the ATM such as City-funded financial literacy programs available within the community. The civic standard design palette, consisting of these elements, would provide a useful foundation for NYPD as it thinks about how to redesign other precincts' vestibule areas to implement elements of the "People's Precinct" program in advance of full-scale precinct renovations. Like implementation of the CCP pod design, implementation of the interior redesign of the vestibule was put on hold pending an overall service design analysis for NYPD's entire system.

Both CCP pod design and the vestibule interior design projects were influenced by an earlier design research project, entitled *Mapping Red Hook/Red Hook HUB: A Creative Placemaking Project*, that was captured by Town+Gown in academic year 2013-2014. The idea for a bulletin board emerged from both sets of co-design meetings with members of the Community Precinct Council, who raised the issue of communications and education. A physical result of the adopted design research project, the Red Hook HUB, is an electronic bulletin board, located at the NYCHA Miccio Community Center in Red Hook, that is a community electronic bulletin board "owned" by community groups, one of which takes responsibility for the curating the content. Since the idea of an electronic bulletin board was embedded in both design research projects discussed above, the last project in this action set aimed at developing a community-based communications strategy and infrastructure leading to information that would support police and community relations and would also be appropriate for an electronic bulletin board located within a police precinct building.

In *Change the Story Brownsville: A Communication Strategy to Build Trust*, students from School of Visual Arts/2016 Impact! Design for Social Change, conducted a multiple method research project that, at its core, identified the relationship between police and the community as a significant challenge and explored ways to enable existing communication channels in Brownsville to increase trust between the police and the community. The researchers' methods included a walking tour to document the physical conditions in the neighborhood; a series of interviews with service providers and agencies to identify community organizations; a participatory design process with community residents utilizing concept cards and narrative prompts to test emerging ideas and gain deeper insight; and, additional research to dig deeper and validate earlier findings.

Taken as a whole, the researchers' insights reflected differing perceptions of the current state of police community interactions, the largest part of which take place outside the precinct building, but also reflected a shared interest in building trust over time with face-to-face interactions. The researchers mapped current communications channels amid differing perceptions of safety within the neighborhood.

The researchers observed that the police and the community approached developing better relationships of trust, which is complicated and dependent on time and perceptions, from opposing directions, with the police starting from an approach of providing public safety and the community starting from an approach of developing personal relationships. The researchers concluded that a solution to achieve the stated desire to build trust required a "counter narrative" to the dominant narrative of negative police community relations. The counter narrative would include key values of Brownsville residents, such as community ownership and sense of belonging, understanding public safety "on the ground" in their neighborhood, knowledge of physical and social neighborhood assets where people want to go and engage, and community art to imagine what can be possible in the future.



Their proposed communications strategy for the digital bulletin board included the creation of a new community newsletter that would leverage existing communication channels; provide a vehicle to change the current narrative by promoting a holistic view of Brownsville; and, overlap with the digital bulletin board. In the social infrastructure behind the proposed strategy, the community would be responsible for the newsletter, creating positive and constructive content about the community, in the context of an agreed-upon set of guidelines and a protocol between the community and the police, with articulated roles, to create the content, since it would migrate to the bulletin board inside the precinct building. Since, however, the proposed protocol specifically envisioned a position of community content coordinator and administrator to interface between the community and the precinct, hiring of a local creative agency and the purchase of a digital bulletin board, the researchers identified the need to identify funding models for start-up operations and long-term operations as pre-condition for implementation.

2014-2015

The People's Precinct at the 73—Design of the Community Connection Pavilion

Town: NYPD

Gown: Pratt/Architecture

Researchers: Heather Alford, Anthony Andrews, Frederic Bellaloum, Theron Bowers, Raymond Chen, Chris Edgemon, Abigail Hancock

Dillon Keane, Gayoung Lee, Nicole Mastrantonio, Steven Woo

The People's Precinct at the 73—Technical Specification and Estimation of the Community Connection Pavilion

Town: NYPD

Gown: Pratt/Architecture

The People's Precinct at the 73—Interior Redesign of the Vestibule

Town: NYPD

Gown: New York School of Interior Design

Researchers: Daniella Brecher, Anna Daubey, Orianna Ellison, Hsien-Huei We

Change the Story Brownsville: A Communication Strategy to Build Trust

Town: NYPD

Gown: School of Visual Arts/2016 Impact! Design for Social Change

Researcher(s): Katie Buckel, Paula DiMarco, Nisha Haji, Mariana Fernandez Magnou, Peter Martin, Charlene Sequeira, Larissa Sasson Vaz, Valérie Yobé

73 Precinct Officers' Lounge and Gym Reimagined

Town: NYPD

Gown: New York School of Interior Design

Researcher(s): Tom Elka, Mateo Baca Fernández, Marie Nguyen, Anette Severino, Sylvia Sirabella, Juliana Tiseo

¹ At the time the “people’s precinct” initiative was announced, NYPD had also undertaken a broad community policing initiative.

² This became [Neighborhood Activation Study - NYC - Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice](#).

³ Since the design phase of the 40th Precinct, which includes a community room, a working set of design principles for precincts and other civic buildings includes creating opportunities during design for increased civic engagement, social cohesion and access to services, subject to budget constraints; the proposed conceptual design of the new 116th Precinct in Southeast Queens reflects space for a community room.