

Enabling Equitable Design in Architecture



Kristen Dong

MS Design Computing

University of Washington



Definitions

From the AIA Guides for Equitable Practice

Equity

Everyone is given equal opportunity and access, **according to their individual needs**

Diversity

A mix of people with a wide range of **visible and invisible** personal and group characteristics, backgrounds, experiences, and preferences

Inclusion

An environment in which everyone feels welcomed, respected, supported, safe, and valued

Architecture as regulation

“ The built environment is characterized by man-made physical features that make it difficult for certain individuals- often poor people and people of color- to access certain places. ¹ ”

Discrimination by design



Benches with internal armrests to prevent sleeping
Source: Denna Jones via Flickr



Low overpasses that public transit cannot pass through on Long Island
Source: Doug Kerr via Flickr

Current Events

Industry solidarity with Black Lives Matter and Stop AAPI Hate

STAND WITH US

In solidarity with Black Lives Matter, GGLO is closing our offices Friday, June 12.

We encourage our staff and friends to use this time within their communities to strike to march to protest to volunteer

Violence and racism against Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are deeply entrenched in the history of the United States. We stand with our staff in denouncing the recent string of murders and attacks, the latest manifestation of the longstanding history of violence and hate crimes against AAPI.

#StopAsianHate #StopAAPIHate

The LMN family is angered and distressed by the horrific violent events that unfolded this week in Atlanta directed at the Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, and we stand in support of our AAPI friends, family, and colleagues in the long-standing trauma that these events and other recent acts of hatred aggravates.

AIA Board statement on systemic racial injustice

To our members,

America's list of racially motivated murders demand action. Eric Garner. Sandra Bland. Michael Brown. Shantel Davis. Atatiana Jefferson. Laquan McDonald. Tony McDade. Pamela Turner. Korryn Gaines. Trayvon Martin. Tamir Rice. Walter Scott. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd. All murdered, because they happened to be black in the United States of America. There are others, and, sadly, we know there will be more. No words can adequately express the depth of anger, frustration, and national shame for their loss or the more than 1,250 black lives ended by police since January 1, 2015, according to The Washington Post's database that tracks police shootings.

AS ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS, WE STRIVE TO CREATE PLACES THAT SUPPORT DIVERSE AND EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL PEOPLE. THE REALITY IS WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO. COMMUNITIES OF COLOR ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE HURTING FROM DEVASTATING, RACIALLY-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE. WE DON'T PRETEND TO HAVE THE ANSWERS AND WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT THE WORDS OF ZGF ALONE ARE ENOUGH TO ADDRESS WHAT IS HAPPENING.

TODAY, WE LOOK TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS' KIMBERLY DOWDELL WHO SAID, "WE MUST ALL LEVERAGE OUR POSITIONS OF PRIVILEGE TO HELP OUR MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS. NEIGHBORS AND COLLEAGUES STRIVE FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS."

THIS IS A DEFINING MOMENT FOR AMERICA AND WE MUST FACE IT TOGETHER.

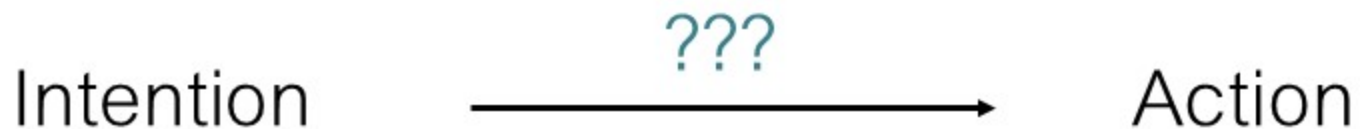
Research Question

How do we enable architects to build more equitably?

Is there missing information?

Lack of experience?

How can we improve the current design process?



Initial Findings

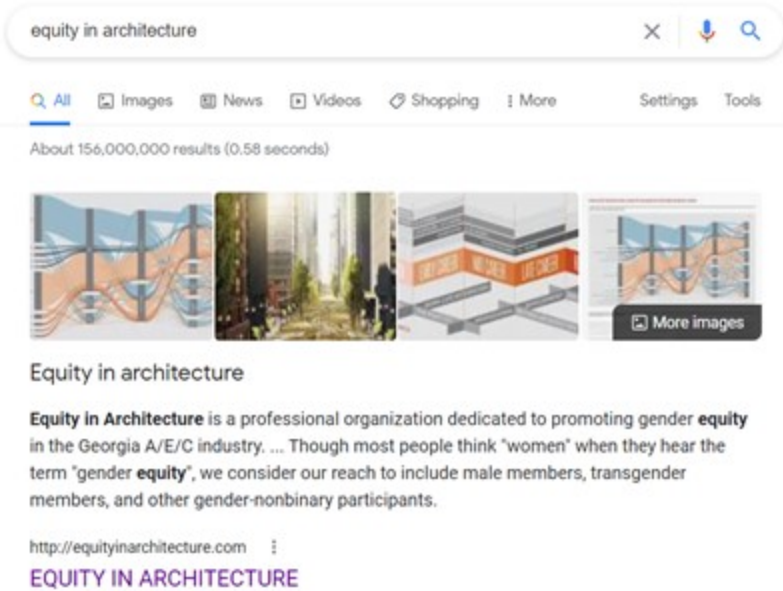
Majority of the literature on equity and architecture is about **internal practices and the profession itself**

The screenshot shows the AIA website's main navigation bar with links for Architects, Career, Advocacy, Events, Topics, Practice, About AIA, and Contracts. The main content area features a large heading 'Equity, diversity, and inclusion' followed by the text 'We are committed to broadening equity, diversity, and inclusion to create a stronger profession'. Below this are social media icons and a 'Mission' section. To the right, there is a 'Future forward' section with a sub-heading 'Harnessing the passion of our members and the broader design community...' and a 'Future forward >' link.

The screenshot shows the 'Programs and opportunities' section of the AIA website. It features a grid of six cards, each with a title, a small image, and a brief description. The cards are: 'Women in architecture' (Initiative), 'Diversity Recognition Program' (Career and the Profession), 'Scholarships' (Career and the Profession), 'Harassment prevention resources' (Report), 'Recommendations from AIA's Equity in Architecture Commission' (Report), and 'Examining the state of diversity' (Report). A blue box highlights the 'Guides for Equitable Practice' section, which includes the text: 'The Guides for Equitable Practice are a vital part of AIA's long-term commitment to lead efforts that ensure the profession of architecture is as diverse as the nation we serve. Learn more >'.

Google Search Results: “equity in architecture”


1. Women in architecture group from Georgia



equity in architecture

All Images News Videos Shopping More Settings Tools

About 156,000,000 results (0.58 seconds)



Equity in architecture

Equity in Architecture is a professional organization dedicated to promoting gender equity in the Georgia A/E/C industry. ... Though most people think “women” when they hear the term “gender equity”, we consider our reach to include male members, transgender members, and other gender-nonbinary participants.

<http://equityinarchitecture.com>

EQUITY IN ARCHITECTURE

2. AIA article linking equity and sustainability



AIA KnowledgeNet

Home Communities Directory Events Browse

Equity in Architecture: It's Part of Sustainability

By Elizabeth Rupp del Monte FAIA posted 08-21-2019 11:59 AM

Justice and equity are difficult issues to connect directly with the practice of architecture and sustainable design. But these are not new issues. They are clearly connected to the lives of architects. They are not new issues.

3. Blog post aggregate, with 3 news articles from 2016



Equity by Design [EQxD]

Minimizing Barriers to Maximize Potential for Success

Why Equity in Architecture Matters

A curated Bibliography of current and relevant articles, blogposts, and published materials of other groups' Guides, Toolkits, and resources for making the case for Equity in Architecture.

Search

WHY EQUITY MATTERS FOR EVERYONE: A NEW VALUE PROPOSITION FOR DESIGN - Rosa Sheng, Trim Tab - Issue 29 Transparency August 20, 2016 LivingFuture.Org



"Equity" and "equality" have long been used interchangeably, but the terms are often confused with each other. While the focus of equality is framed with everyone having the same seat

Knowledge Gap

Have to know where to look

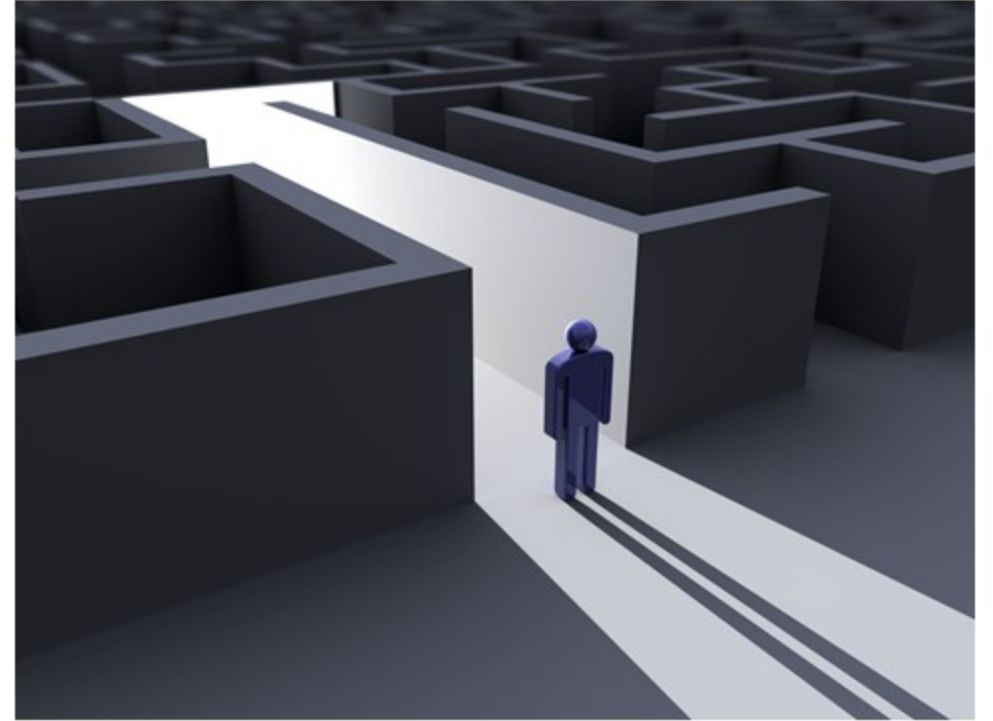
What you find might not be relevant to your project

Information may come from

- Projects

- Firms

- People



Case Study: Grant High School, Portland OR



\$138 million, 1800-student modernization of a 1920's historically significant school

Extensive engagement with students and faculty process found **social injustice pervasive in existing architecture**

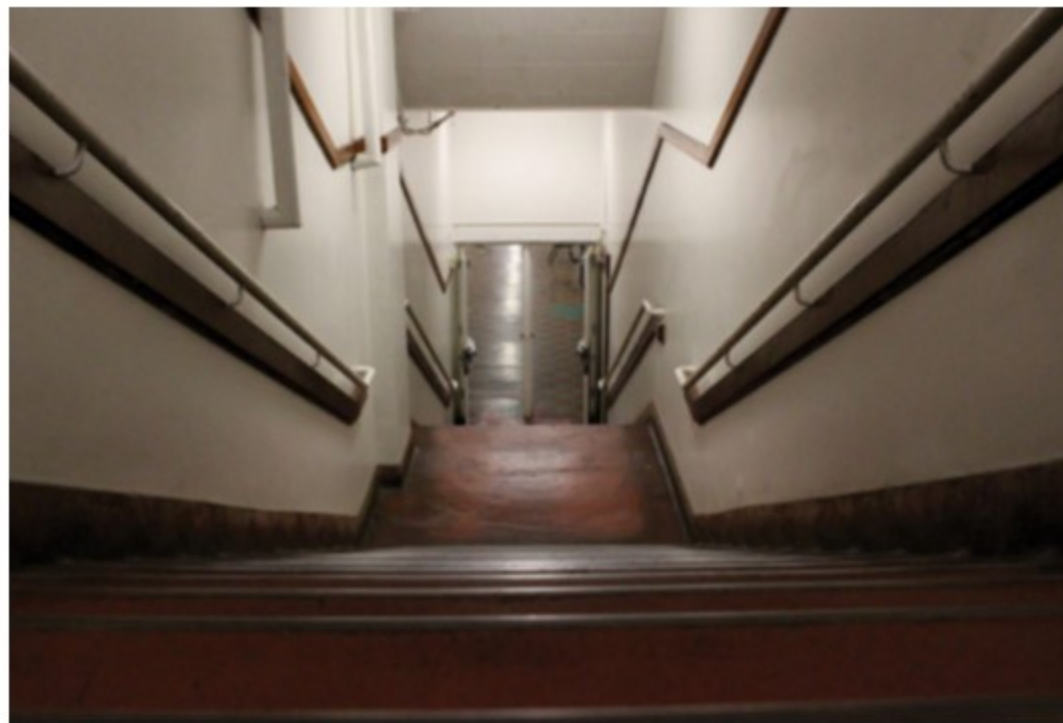
Redesigned to intentionally address disadvantage through design

Case Study: Grant High School, Portland OR

- Year-long community engagement
- 100+ user group meetings and student outreach sessions
- Uncovered socioeconomic rift in school's layout and other inequitable design features



Community outreach meetings



Stairs to basement cafeteria where free and reduced meals were served

"I did not drink liquids from the hours of 6:00am and 3:30pm...I would rather feel kind of unpleasant than terrified in the mens bathroom."

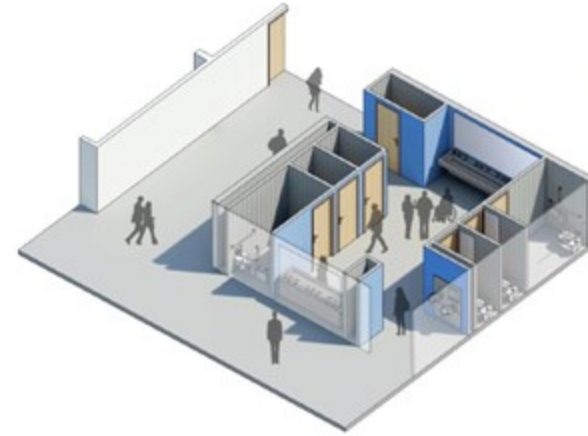
-Anonymous student on bathrooms before modernization

Case Study: Grant High School, Portland OR

Redesign



Open, daylit common areas



Gender neutral, two entrance bathrooms



The information is out there.

How do we share it?

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Pathfinder Web Tool

Goal: Provide architects with relevant EDI information, customized to their project

Web tool that **enables the human to fix the human problem**

- Does an equity focused project audit
- Gives action items specific to the project
- Starting point for internal and external discussion



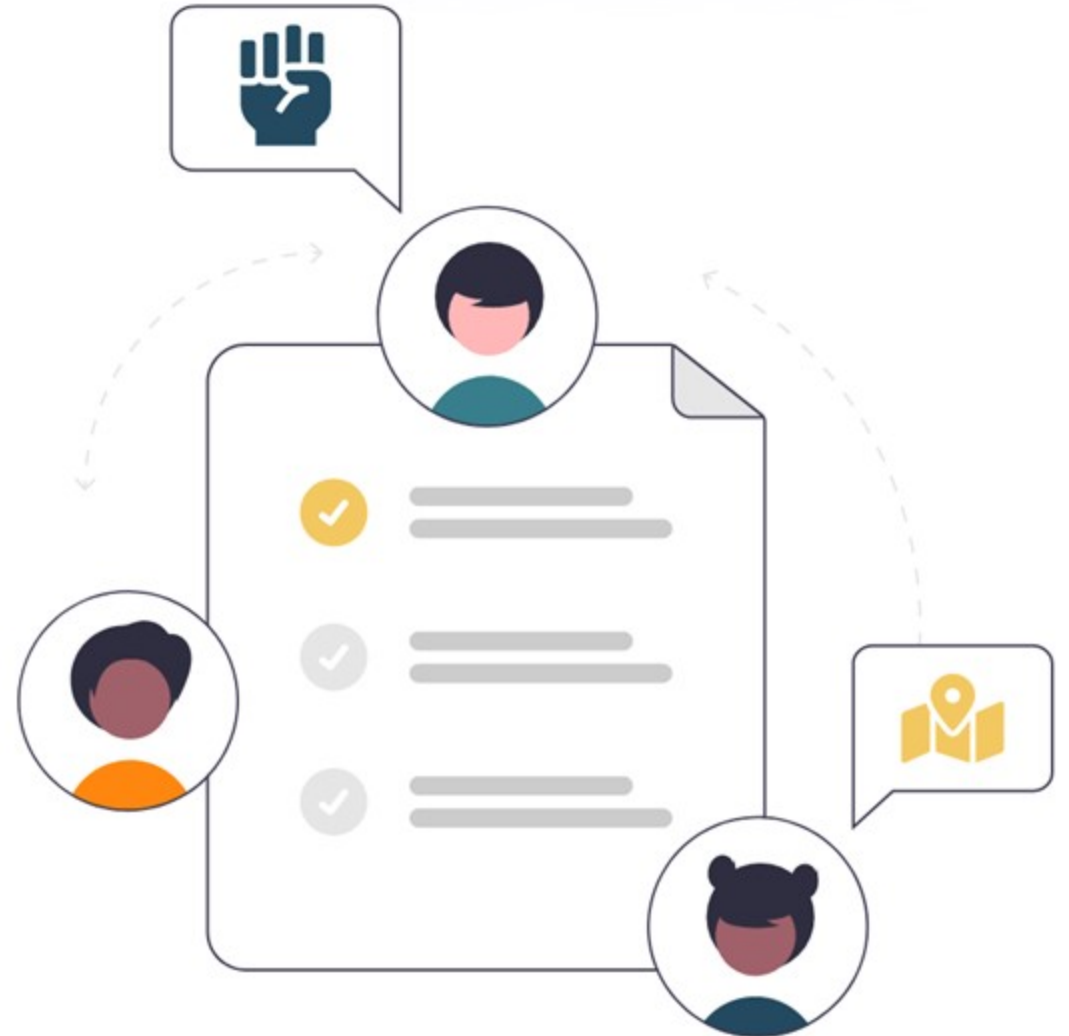
equity diversity inclusion **pathfinder**

Designing more socially just built environments
by connecting architects with customized, actionable information

Getting Started

New User

Login



how to use

EDI Pathfinder can help you make more socially conscious decisions on your projects by **providing suggestions and resources customized to your project.**

Answer the questions as best you can, then use your analysis to better guide your project.

Use the pathfinder **multiple times** throughout a project to see how your results change. Things like project phases and team composition can affect your outcome.

Your analysis is a **starting point for genuine community engagement** and dialogue, not a checklist or decision-maker. Thoughtful follow-through is still necessary!





assumptions

This tool holds community feedback above all. *Consider your analysis secondary to any direct community input.*

There is no such thing as a 100% equitable project. However this tool can guide you towards better outcomes.

Lastly, all technologies are biased, including this one.

The tool will be constantly updating to be better than its last version, so using it multiple times may yield new and possibly more relevant results.

Let's get started!



New Project



Existing Projects

Pothos Park 2/12/21

Main Street Community Center 7/25/20

Big Company Office 5/8/20

Peace Lily Food Pantry 1/22/20

Springfield City Hall 12/20/19

XYZ Retrofit 10/17/19

New Project

Project Name

Block 42 Condominiums

Address

23 Cedarwood Lane

City

La Noscea

Zip Code

53560

Begin



Sample questions

Is there an established equitable design project framework?

No

Yes

I don't know



Sample questions

Which community assets are present? Select all that apply.

- Business groups and employers
- Civic service groups
- Educational institutions
- Policy and advocacy organizations
- Health and hunger non-profits
- Non-profit housing and human services

Next

I don't know





Customized analysis for:

[Add Notes](#)
[PDF Download](#)

Block 42 Condominiums
23 Cedarwood Lane, La Noscea 53560
2/15/21

! Location notice

Census data indicates significant change in average income and average rent of this area over the past 20 years compared to surrounding areas. [See information on gentrification here.](#)

Limit the impact of the design team's bias

Enroll in externally-run unconscious bias trainings. Baseline your team's biases and cultural competency will frame future engagements with the community. Even if your team have done trainings before, consider doing another if a few years have passed. Attitudes and cultures are constantly shifting. [Resources here to find a course that suits your design team and firm.](#)

Allocate budget and time for community engagement

Including community engagement in budgets and project plans means these efforts are less likely to be skipped over when deadlines become tight. Establish explicit billing codes for this effort. Community engagement should not be included in overhead.

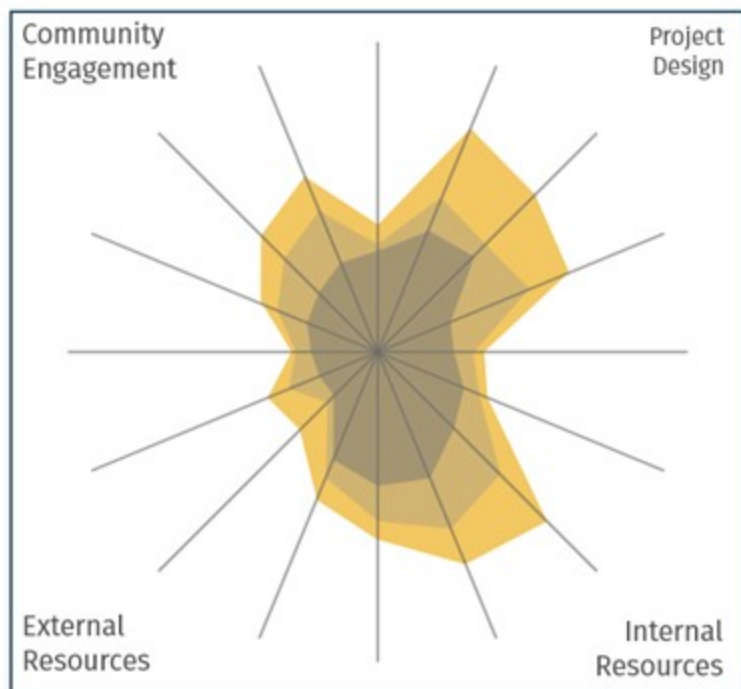
[Further information on advocating for community engagement in project proposals here.](#)

Evaluate community assets

If this project provides a community asset or service, check if the design competes with or ignores existing ones. If this area is in need of one, and the project does not currently provide it, see if it can be incorporated into the design or offer to facilitate the development of this asset to the community. [Information on asset mapping here.](#)

Consider these actions as well:

Develop casual communication with community members outside of standard events, research social and racial history of site, research history of community interactions with designers, develop financial flow chart to see movement of funds in or out of community



Pothos Park

Full Report

Update

Past Results

Last updated: 2/12/21

Taken 3 times, latest results below

Limit the impact of the design team's bias

Enroll in externally-run unconscious bias trainings. Baselining your team's biases and cultural competency will frame future engagements with the community. Even if your team have done trainings before, consider doing another if a few years have passed. Attitudes and cultures are constantly shifting. [Resources here to find a course that suits your design team and firm.](#)

Allocate budget and time for community engagement

Including community engagement in budgets and project plans means these efforts are less likely to be skipped over when deadlines become tight. Establish explicit billing codes for this effort. Community engagement should not be included in overhead. [Further information on advocating for community engagement in project proposals here.](#)

Evaluate community assets

If this project provides a community asset or service, check if the design competes with or ignores existing ones. If this area is in need of one, and the project does not currently provide it, see if it can be incorporated into the design or offer to facilitate the development of this asset to the community. [Information on asset mapping here.](#)

Consider these actions as well:

Develop casual communication with community members outside of standard events, research social and racial history of site, research history of community interactions with designers, develop financial flow chart to see movement of funds in or out of community



Main Street Community Center

Full Report

Update

Past Results

Last updated: 7/25/20

Taken 2 times, latest results below

Research social and racial history of area

Including community engagement in budgets and project plans means these efforts are less likely to be skipped over when deadlines become tight. Establish explicit billing codes for this effort. Community engagement should not be included in overhead. [Further information on advocating for community engagement in project proposals here.](#)

Next steps:

User testing and discussion with practicing architects

“What’s your current design process around social equity?”

“Where are the hangups for you?”

“Could a tool like this help?”

Open Discussion

What's the role of digital tools in a complex social problem?

How might technology advance equity in architecture?

Should this tool even exist?

What design elements could advance equity, diversity, and inclusion at the Athletic Center?

What communities will interact with it?