

# Service Design as a Way to Engage Communities

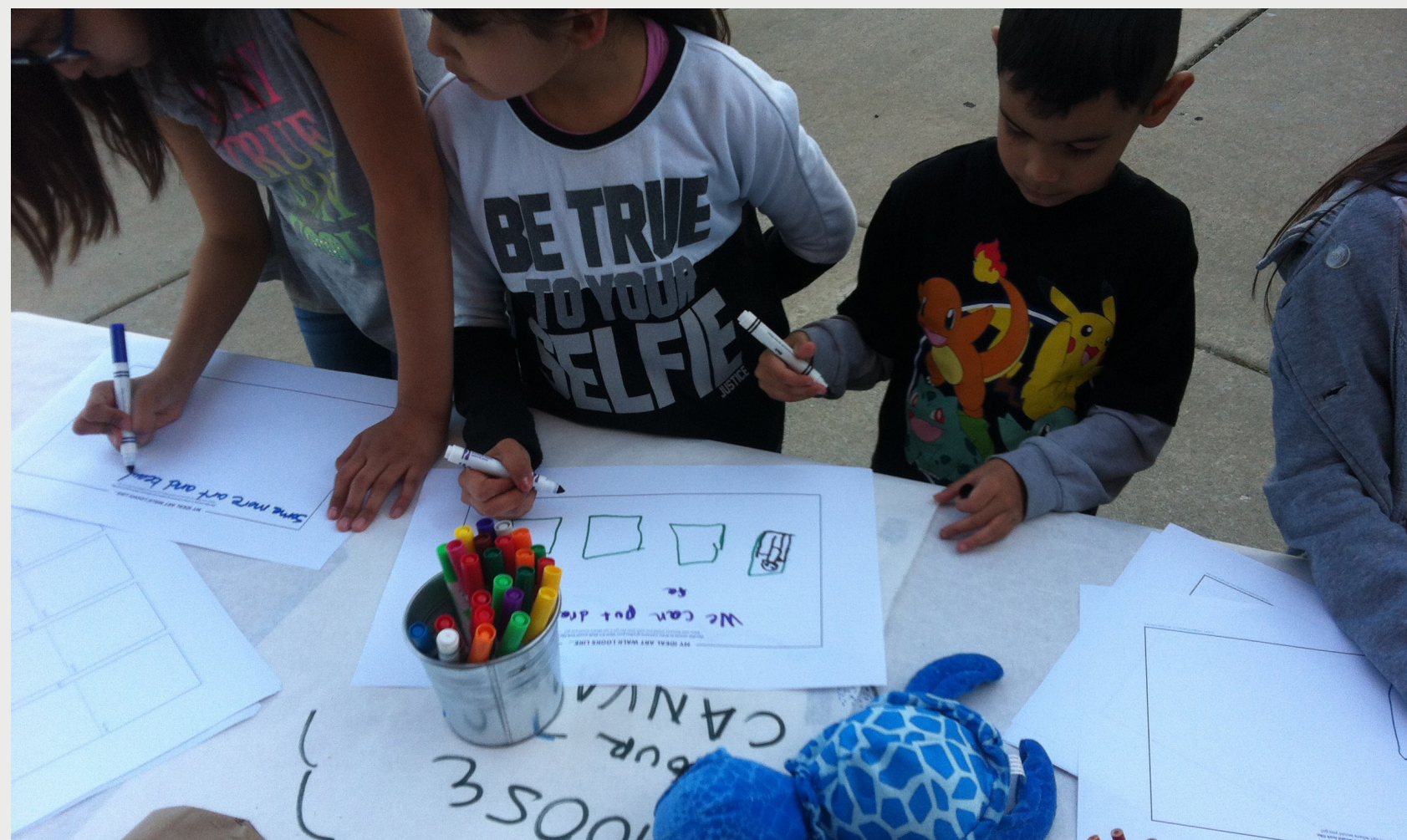
Indianapolis, IN, USA

## ABSTRACT

In an equally distressed and burgeoning community just outside of our major metropolitan city, there is a history of transformation efforts—from creative placemaking, to affordable housing initiatives, to economic re-development—which have all seemed to fall short in the area of community engagement. From the creation of neighborhood festivals that have low resident turnout, to a backlash of discouraged citizens who feel unheard and uninformed, there was a need to re-consider how to involve this unique

community—made up of four very distinct neighborhoods—in the imminent re-development of the area in which they live. In the winter of 2016, our service design and creative strategy consultancy was brought in to a city-wide visionary community development project tied to our rapidly approaching bicentennial, in order to utilize service design methodologies as a way to engage communities and to design with organizations and community residents according to their needs and desires.

Our short paper highlights a case study of an ongoing collaboration between our consultancy; a non-profit organization dedicated to the growth of it's community; a higher-education institution with a legacy of community engagement; a local office of the country's largest community development corporation focused on Creative Placemaking and community revitalization; and, most importantly, various residents and stakeholders.



## Resident Engagement Methods

Resident engagement methods were focused on further developing and supporting current community programming in the River West area. The focus was on going to residents and meeting them “where they were,” selecting specific locations at optimal timeframes for resident input and engagement.

### 1) Hosting the “River West Street Festival Kickoff Party”

This included canvassing the River West community and surrounding neighborhoods to gather information and invite residents—whether they had volunteered or not at the previous festival—to celebrate their successes and share their challenges of the last year’s festival;

### 2) Engaging residents at the first annual “Art Walk”

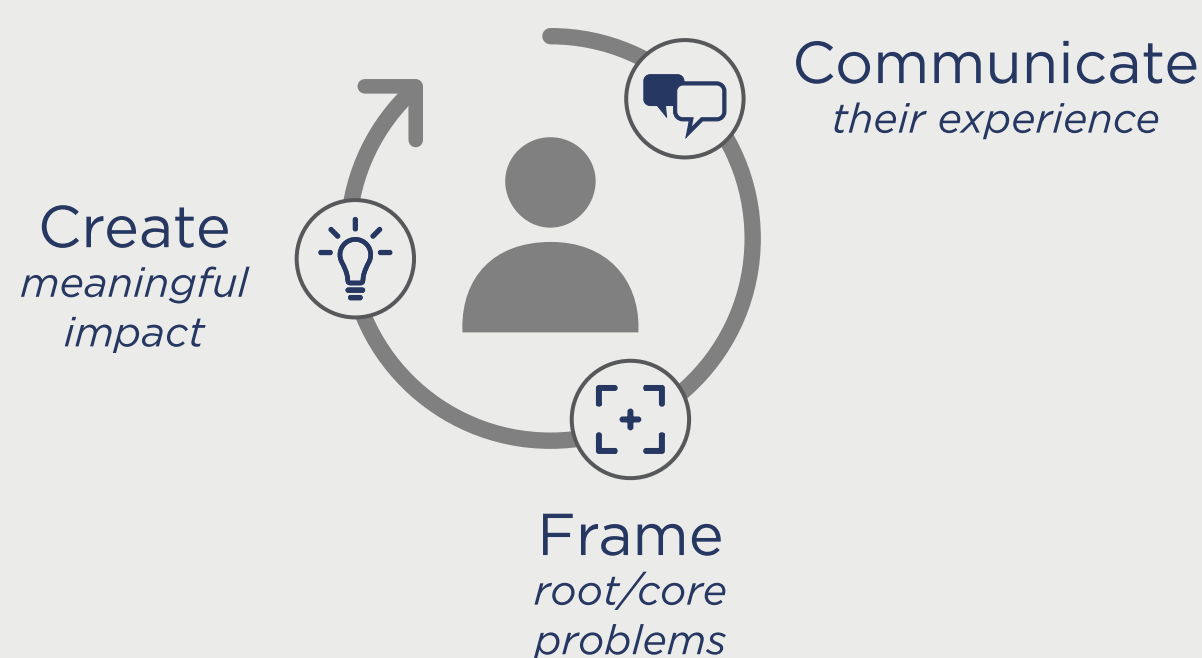
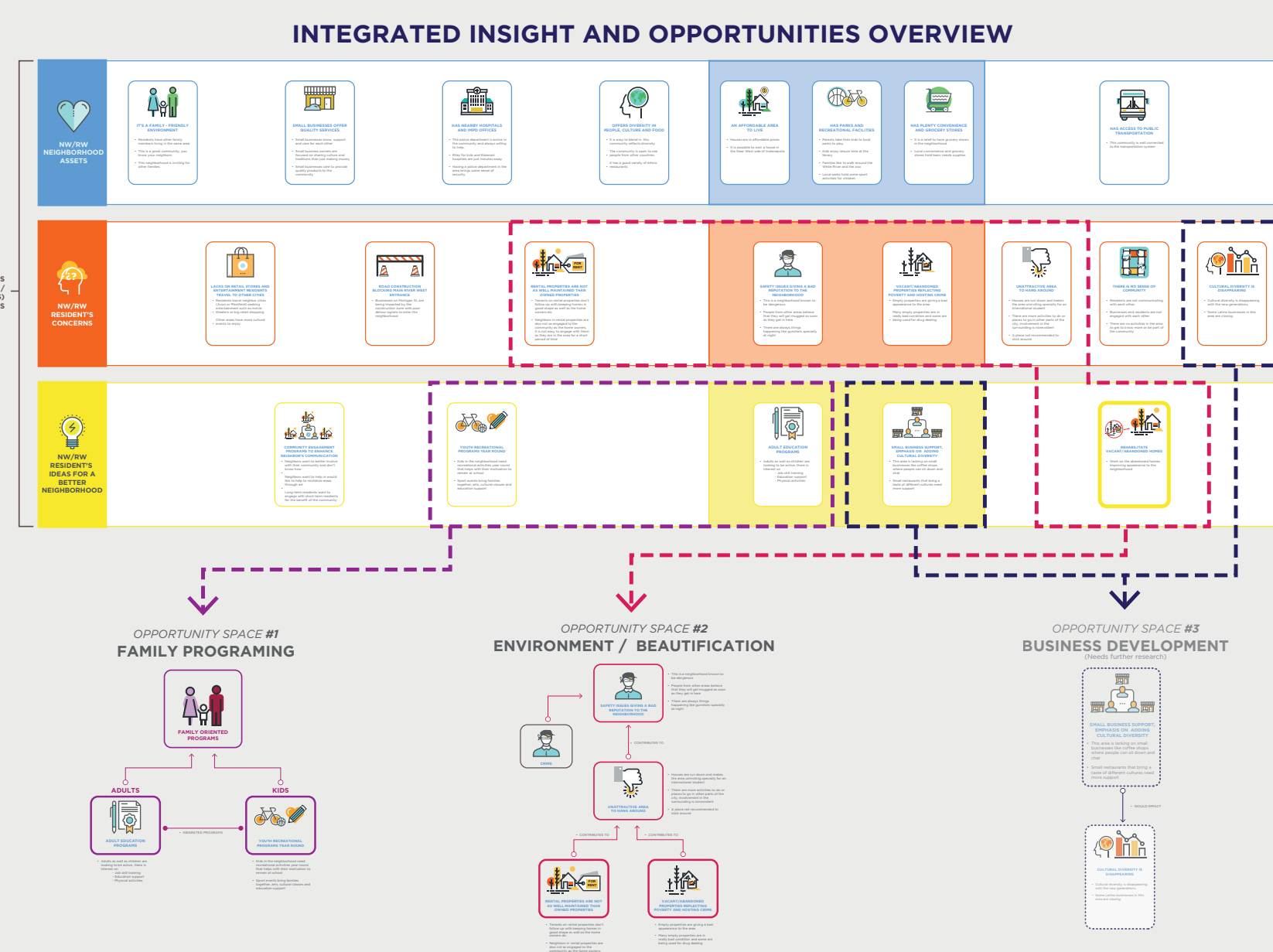
This included creating tools and probes to enable people to share their thoughts and ideas for creating resident- and community-driven programming;

### 3) Facilitating multiple “Community Outreach Pop-up Sessions”

These included tools and prompts that asked residents (specifically youth and minorities) to share their ideas and challenges with the previous festival;

### 4) Conducting 1-on-1 Resident Interviews

This allowed for deeper discussion around exploring daily routines, hopes and desires of both short- and long-term residents, and engaging them in activities that allowed them to share their daily lives and rituals.



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