

ACT for Alexandria

Design & Thinking Workshop Saturday, June 16, 2018

Summary Report

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Workshop Summary

Facilitator: Elgin Cleckley, Elgin Cleckley is a designer, educator, and creative director of _mpathic design, a Design Thinking initiative and practice focusing on strategies for empathic, human valued design. Elgin is an Assistant Professor at the University of Virginia, teaching Design Thinking studios and seminars, also directing the School's Design Thinking program in Ghana.

30 participants: Nonprofit leaders, residents, school and government leaders

What: Alexandrians engaged in dynamic group activities tapping into personal experiences, perspectives, and creativity. Participants discussed data about Alexandria, considered the implications and opportunities for collective action and surfaced ideas and possibilities to build a collective vision for Alexandria.

Where: Convergence, 1801 Quaker Lane, Alexandria, VA

When: Saturday, June 16, 9am-1pm

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Background & Context

Why Design Thinking?

Design Thinking, the methods, strategies, and techniques of designers, is a collaborative process that quickly develops new ideas. Utilizing this process in Workshops allows for collective understanding amongst participants and directives for stakeholder needs.

For this Workshop, we began with empathy exercises to get comfortable, followed by a Design & Thinking process of Identification, Collection (Research), Analysis (Synthesis), Idea Generation, and Realization (Sharing). The Workshop included two strategic Design Challenges resulting in pilots that meet ACT's goals and objectives for community engagement.

Why Design Thinking for ACT?

ACT set the following goals and objectives for this Workshop (used as the framework for activities):

- Empathy & Discovery: Deep understanding of stakeholders & our community
- Problem Framing: Are we asking the right questions? What's the problem we're trying to solve?
- Brainstorming: How might we? What are the potential solutions?
- Prototyping: What experiments/pilots can we try?



Identification: Key Takeaways

1. What do you love about Alexandria?
 - Diversity, Small-town feeling, Strong sense of community
2. What would you like to improve in Alexandria?
 - Education, Housing, Infrastructure, Community engagement
3. What would you financially support (or currently do) to help Alexandria?
 - Youth, Community engagements, Education, Small businesses
4. Who are the different types of people who contribute to the vibrancy of Alexandria?
 - Business leaders/Entrepreneurs, Everyone, Artists, Teachers/Volunteers/Kids, Nonprofit leaders



Identification: Key Takeaways

5. How can a community organization / foundation help make life-changing results in new, innovative ways?
 - Increased communication, collaboration and partnerships between organizations, residents and government
 - More targeted outreach and community engagement events
 - Talking directly to people who have needs and the people who want to help them
6. What community organizations / foundations are you aware of that help in Alexandria? Are they local, or national?
 - Most frequently mentioned: Campagna Center, ACT for Alexandria, Carpenter's Shelter, ALIVE!, CFNC (Child Family Network Center), Volunteer Alexandria
7. What are regional and / or national trends in philanthropy and community impact that you are aware of?
 - Collaborations and partnerships – collective impact/private/public/pooled funds
 - Outcomes and guidance focus
 - Numerous funding trends: Decreased funding, increased donor advised funds, increased targeted funding

Identification: Key Takeaways

8. What type of community programs would you like to see in Alexandria?

- Kids/Youth Learning, Vocational training and Community-building events

9. What does success look like – for a community program or organization?

- Measurable results, community engagement, stability

10. What are your hopes and dreams for Alexandria? What do you think a perfect community is?

- National model for excellence (education, affordable housing, low unemployment), inclusion



Collection: Key Takeaways

Who are the Stakeholders (persons of interest) for ACT?

- Local politicians
- Faith-based orgs
- Small-business owners
- School leadership and ACPS
- Local nonprofits
- Anyone served by ACT-given grants
- ACT donors/philanthropists
- City of Alexandria government
- State and federal government
- Neighborhoods
- Homeless population
- All residents (children and youth, seniors, families)
- Volunteers
- Immigrant community
- Low-income community

Collection: Key Takeaways

Who are the Stakeholders ACT needs to reach?

- West End and Arlandria residents
- Nonprofit leaders
- Youth
- Philanthropic community
- Immigrant families
- Anyone who receives a service
- Neighborhood organizations
- Young, single professionals (not engaged in community)
- Refugees
- Veterans
- Seniors
- Special needs community
- Donor and investors
- City and private partnerships
- Business community
- Education system

Collection: Key Takeaways

Who is not at the table?

- Recipients of services
- Local politicians (Engage – don't just show up)
- Refugee/immigrant population
- Minority community – specifically black men; have to invite them and be more inclusive
- Developers/Big Corporations
- Special needs community
- State and federal policymakers
- Youth
- Lower income community members
- Future residents/businesses
- Realtors
- Professional advisors – estate planners, financial advisors, lawyers, etc
- Citizens
- Businesses
- Children
- National foundations
- Tourists
- Non-English speakers



Design Challenge #1: Visual Advertisement

Your Design Team has been commissioned by ACT to create a visual advertisement for your selected Stakeholder – with the direct purpose of raising awareness, funds, and increasing community engagement.

Ad Themes:

- Financial, community & personal impact:
 - ACT for Alexandria convenes residents around issues of importance
 - Engages citizens in action to make Alexandria sustainable, inclusive, prosperous
- Features stories of ACT and target audience meeting community needs
- ACT as connector:
 - Nonprofits and business
 - Government, tools, resources, programs,
- Multi-platform: web, print, metro



Alexandria Analysis: Key Takeaways

What has changed in Alexandria in the last 3 years?

- Business on King St. closing
- Bottom dropped out of retail
- Riverfront opening up
- Waterfront (taxi, development, MGM/National Harbor)
- MGM arrived
- Wharf developed → More competition
- NSF & other development near Carlyle means more transient workers moving in and out
- Development on Eisenhower Ave (NSF)
- More townhomes in Van Dorn area but not necessarily affordable places to live
- Gentrification
- We have opened some affordable housing
- Population more dense
- Seen an increase in more diverse, immigrant families
- More traffic
- Increased property values and property tax
- Student populations increased
- Schools in disrepair and bursting at seams
- Mayor
- City Council
- ACT more impactful
- More violence (serial killer, congressional baseball shooting, gangs)

Alexandria Analysis: Key Takeaways

What changes do you envision in Alexandria in the next 3 years?

- More change in retail structure → more big box stores, more innovative retail solutions
- Torpedo Factory not renewing leases
- More effort to attract business
- Development of Eisenhower Ave
- Greater gap between haves and have nots with reduced budgets
- Challenge on minimum wage
- Higher cost of living
- Moving Section A housing out of Old Town
- Even less affordable housing
- Increased housing costs
- Changing demographics, e.g. Hamlet area
- More attention to the schools
- Stronger tax base
- Massive volunteer effort
- Transit partnership with Arlington



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Design Challenge #2: Community Engagement

Your Team needs to come up with a Design for a new community intervention / engagement idea for Alexandria, inspired by our work today - that you will present to ACT.

1: Community Smart Boards	2: Spring for Answers	3: Community Connection Events
Data collection that empowers all Alexandrians and captures the voices of Alexandrians	Massive integrated volunteer one day, 24 hour event, incorporating a wide variety of engagement activities	Feature events with food and story telling that bring different communities together
Ask about needs, perspectives; but also ask: what are you doing for others?	Multi-channel approach: Reach people in physical locations; Go door-to-door; Reach out to civic, human service organizations	Help us help you. What's important to you?
Place Smart boards for dynamic question and answers around the community	Leverage online social media and free media in local newspapers	Use facilitators speak the language of the community
Bring the boards together to city hall and have an event where people walk around to see what's important to them in different communities	Tap into informal influences and indigenous leaders	Work with established communities, churches, schools, different clubs to capture thoughts and unique perspectives about what matters to them
Create an awareness in the community that creates a sense of "we"		Community that creates a sense of "we"



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