

PURPOSE BUILT

ABOUT THE PURPOSE BUILT SERIES

Capital projects often bring lasting benefits to nonprofit organizations and the people they serve. Each project affects an organization's ability to achieve its mission— signaling its values, shaping interaction with its constituents, influencing its work processes and culture, and creating new financial realities. While many projects succeed in fulfilling their purpose, others fall short of their potential. Through a multi-year research study capturing lessons learned from a diverse set of completed projects around the world, MASS Design Group has created the *Purpose Built Series*— a set of core principles and tools aimed at untangling the often complex and opaque process of building for those considering or conducting capital projects. The series is based on the findings that the best results occur when a project is built with purpose— grounded in a clear and strategic mission that informs design decisions with a scope that matches what its organization can afford to build, operate, and maintain.

Learn more at:

massdesigngroup.org/purposebuilt
hello@massdesigngroup.org

DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

HOW DO WE MAKE DESIGN DECISIONS TO ACHIEVE AND AMPLIFY THE MISSION OF OUR PROJECT?

Within the *Purpose Built* process, *Design Opportunities* are part of the *Planning* phase (*Planning for Impact*, pg. 11). *Design Opportunities* can be leveraged to connect a project's mission and impact. In addition to defining programmatic requirements, project teams should define the qualities and characteristics of the spaces in and around the building. These qualities will be communicated to the design professional through the *Design Brief* (*Planning for Impact*, pg. 15) and inform the user experience of the capital project. While there can be many design opportunities to consider, we've identified the following to get you started: site, culture, landscape, program, massing, experience, circulation, performance, and materials.

Project teams should evaluate the opportunities that may be unique to the project and add more as needed. Explaining and discussing these design opportunities in detail not only highlights the value of design to work to achieve project goals, but also helps teams in understanding the vocabulary necessary to argue for high quality design in their project. Being able to understand and articulate the value of design enables teams to share and persuade stakeholders of its value.



Site



Experience



Culture



Circulation



Landscape



Performance



Program



Materials



Massing



Other

To help funders and their nonprofit partners make the most of capital projects, MASS Design Group created the *Purpose Built* series in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. The series includes tools and resources and is the result of a multi-faceted, multi-year research study that found the best results occur when a project is built with purpose, balancing mission, design, and feasibility. This tool is built by MASS Design Group for the van Beuren Charitable Foundation as part of the *Purpose Built* toolkit. You can find the full series at massdesigngroup.org/purposebuilt

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Below is a list of nine *Design Opportunities* we have identified that can impact most projects, along with common examples of each. This tool will guide you in thinking about what opportunities exist for your project. It's okay to not use all of the *Design Opportunities* listed below so think about what makes sense for your project and even add your own as you go!



Site

Where you place and how you position your project within the existing built and natural environments.

EXAMPLES:

- Alignment to neighboring buildings
- Transit-oriented development
- Consideration of wetlands or other landscape preservation
- Site selection based on immediate building contexts, urban conditions, etc.



Experience

How people interact with and feel in a space.

EXAMPLES:

- Creating moments of reflection
- Designing for human connection
- Creating spaces that foster a sense of safety and empowerment



Culture

How your project is informed by and connects to local values, beliefs, and practices to create a sense of identity.

- Identifying land acknowledgment
- Honoring local history and legacy
- Representing generations (past, present, and future)



Circulation

How people and things move through and around your project and the site.

- Responding to accessibility
- Defining major paths of movement
- Creating a hierarchy of movements



Landscape

How your project integrates environmental, social and aesthetic qualities in the exterior spaces.

- Incorporate a culturally significant and diverse plant palette
- Identify what areas on site should not be disturbed



Performance

How your project accounts for occupant comfort and health through active and passive building systems, and plans for durability and climate resilience over time.

- Prioritizing sustainable systems and strategies
- Incorporating natural lighting
- Considering ventilation strategies



Program

The types of spaces required in your project and how you purposefully arrange those spaces to maximize efficiency and experience.

- Creating a hierarchy of space types
- Identifying key user groups
- Mapping out time of uses
- Identify opportunities to expand services through partnerships



Materials

What elements you choose to form, cover, and build your project.

- Incorporating energy resilient building elements
- Identifying local sourcing
- Re-purposing existing site elements



Massing

The shape, form, and size that your project will take, including its orientation on the site.

- Defining interior vs. exterior space
- Defining the scale
- Defining how massing responds to climate, shade, light, etc.
- Looking for inspiration in existing context
- Massing responsive to building typology



Other

Add and define your own Design Opportunity!

INSTRUCTIONS

The following pages have a *Design Opportunity* per page and one is left blank for you to add more opportunities that might be unique to the project. Use these worksheets to identify where and how your project can leverage these *Design Opportunities* and how they have the potential to create meaningful impact. You are encouraged to read through all the *Design Opportunities* and questions to consider before you dive into one. If you have access to a large scale printer and prefer working with your team with post-its, you can download a large-format 36" x 7' poster size to brainstorm your ideas! Poster size: 36" x 7' ([Click here to download - link will be live when poster is uploaded to website](#))

STEP 1.

Read through the design opportunity and questions to consider

DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES



Site

Where you place and how you position your project within the existing built and natural environments.

Questions to Consider

- How might you select a site that best amplifies your mission?
- How can you leverage your site to create connection to (or separation from) your neighborhood?
- How might the site design adapt with respect to climate change effects? And support in mitigating climate change impact?
- How might the project site incorporate lessons from the existing built and natural environment?

Add your ideas in the blank space below:

STEP 2.

Place all of your ideas in the blank space provided!

potential qualitative impact

Design Opportunity

potential quantitative impact

STEP 3.

Brainstorm initial thoughts on how the ideas captured might support the project mission and its potential qualitative and quantitative impact.

potential qualitative impact

Design Opportunity

potential quantitative impact

STEP 4.

Star the ones you think you should prioritize in your project for easy reference!

potential qualitative impact

Design Opportunity

potential quantitative impact

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Site

Where you place and how you position your project within the existing built and natural environments.

Questions to Consider

- *How might you select a site that best amplifies your mission?*
- *How can you leverage your site to create connection to (or separation from) your neighborhood?*
- *How might the site design adapt with respect to climate change effects? And support in mitigating climate change impact?*
- *How might the project site incorporate lessons from the existing built and natural environment?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Culture

How your project is informed by and connects to local values, beliefs, and practices to create a sense of identity.

Questions to Consider

- *How might the project design incorporate lessons from historical and social contexts? And best practices from regional customs and traditions?*
- *How might the project design acknowledge and reflect generations of people (Past, Present, and Future)?*
- *How might the project support existing actors and trends within the community?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Landscape

How your project integrates environmental, social and aesthetic qualities in the exterior spaces.

Questions to Consider

- *How might the project landscape integrate native plantings?*
- *How might the landscape design reflect and connect the site's natural environment?*
- *How might the landscape design support a variety of uses and activities for visitors?*
- *How might the landscape adapt with respect to climate change effects? And support in mitigating climate change impact?*
- *How might local materials be used within the landscape for additional features on site?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Program

The types of spaces required in your project and how you purposefully arrange those spaces to maximize efficiency and experience.

Questions to Consider

- *What are the critical types of spaces the project should include?*
- *Are there opportunities to consider additional types of spaces to bring more benefits to the community?*
- *Are there opportunities to consider flexible types of spaces, e.g. multi-functional spaces?*
- *Are there opportunities to expand current services provided through new partnerships to amplify the project mission?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Massing

The shape, form, and size that your project will take, including its orientation on the site.

Questions to Consider

- *How might the massing allow the project to be responsive to the site context while also creating a sense of place?*
- *How might the massing be a symbolic representation the project mission?*
- *What are relevant and contextual inspirational project massing precedents to learn from?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Experience

How people interact with and feel in a space.

Questions to Consider

- *What do we want visitors to feel when experiencing the project?*
- *What are the unique design qualities that will best meet the different users' needs?*
- *What design qualities will affect changes in behaviors or attitudes?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Circulation

How people and things move through and around your project and the site.

Questions to Consider

- *How might the project's circulation be designed with equity and accessibility in mind?*
- *How might the project's physical connections to other buildings, sites, and natural corridors be intentionally designed to maximize user experience?*
- *How might the project's circulation create an experiential journey for users?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Performance

How your project accounts for occupant comfort and health through building systems, and plans for durability and climate resilience over time.

Questions to Consider

- *How might the building systems reduce energy use and support in reducing the carbon footprint of the project?*
- *How might the project leverage an innovative building system and/or building performance strategy?*
- *How might the building systems create comfort and foster health for the different users?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Materials

What elements you choose to form, cover, and build your project.

Questions to Consider

- *Are there opportunities to incorporate local and/or regional materials in the project?*
- *Are there opportunities to leverage local skillsets and/or labor from the community?*
- *How might the material selections and sourcing support in mitigating the effects of climate change?*
- *If there is an existing building on the site, what materials might be reused and/or repurposed?*

Add your ideas in the blank space below:



Other:

Questions to Consider

- *What is another design opportunity that might amplify the project mission?*
- *What is another design opportunity that might support in mitigating climate change?*
- ---
- ---

Add your ideas in the blank space below: