PARTICIPATORY DESIGN TOOLKIT:

CASA MUSEO ISMAEL RIVERA'S POCKET PARK

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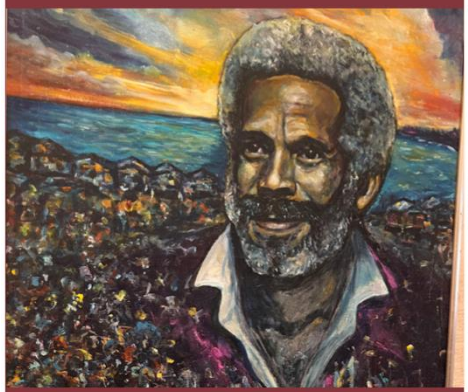

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Visuals and Materials

This toolkit combines the participatory design strategies used in the Casa Museo Ismael Rivera 2023 D-Term IQP project. In this document, you will find detailed descriptions, procedures, images, materials, and findings regarding the participatory design activities that were used in the project. This step-by-step manual for participatory park design is meant for students, researchers, and community members interested in using participatory design.

The Casa Museo Ismael Rivera project was a community-based project done by students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, in the sub-barrio Machuchal of Santruce San Juan, Puerto Rico. The project used participatory methods to design a pocket park and performance space for the Casa Museo Ismael Rivera. The methodology focused on three main participatory design events to engage the community, gather insightful input, and receive feedback on current designs. Those three events are the Memory Box activity; the Participatory Park Mapping activity; and the Visual Ranking activity.

Participatory Design

Participatory design links designers and users in a co-design process, allowing people to actively participate in the design process.

Participatory design is a feedback loop where designers create prototypes, interact with the community, implement the received input, and re-design. This process is meant to be repeated multiple times, allowing many design iterations too, creating a balanced final design.[1]

Pros:

- The final design meets the needs of the community
- More diversity of ideas and sharing of perspectives
- Gives a platform for marginalized people to be heard

Cons:

- Harder to organize and requires substantially more planning
- Time intensive
- Resource Intensive

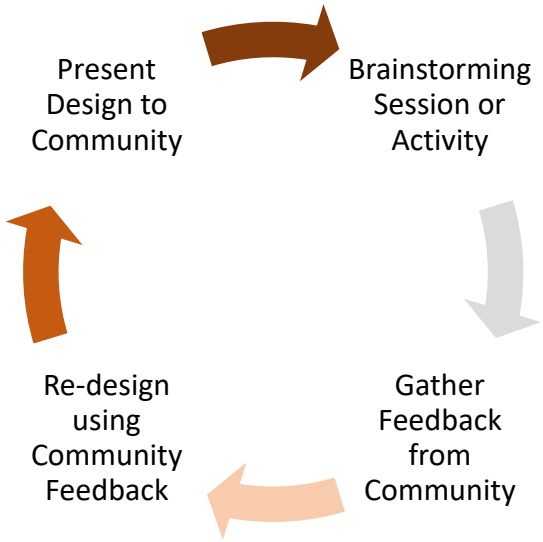


Figure 1 Participatory design process

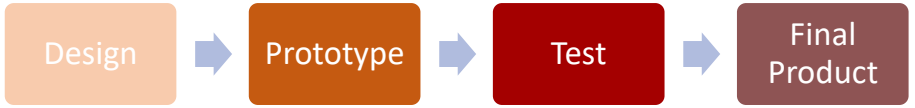


Figure 2: Standard design process

[1] Hwang T., & Fellow R. (2012). Participatory Design Toolkit. *The National Design Leadership Initiative of Enterprise Community Partners.*

Park Design

Figure 3: Gather input from community

Participatory park design is unique to each project, but all of them share a similar general structure and method of input-design-repeat[2]. The first step in the participatory process is input, which is crucial in engaging the community with the design process. Gathering input from participants is best done via an open dialog[3], where community members can learn from each other and build off their ideas. The second step in the design process is to implement feedback from the community into the design, creating a new design that emphasizes the wants of the community. Finally, the last step of the design process is to repeat the process. Participatory designs are always evolving and changing, so repeating the design process through multiple rounds of iteration is crucial.

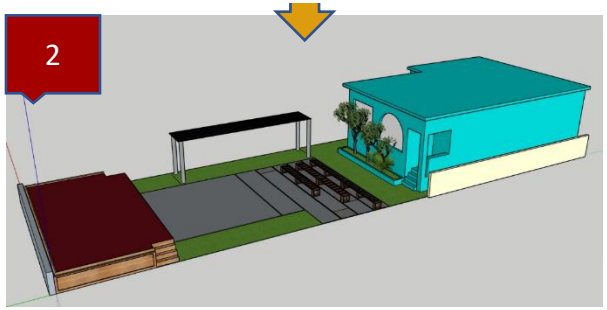


Figure 5: CAD design

Figure 4: Gathering feedback on designs

[2] Hwang T., & Fellow R. (2012). Participatory Design Toolkit. *The National Design Leadership Initiative of Enterprise Community Partners.*

[3] O'Neill, Crespo. (2018) "The Landscape of Community and Participatory Design in Puerto Rico: A Critical Examination of the Effects of Attempting to Facilitate 'Listening to Their Voices,' ('Escuchando Las Voces') the Island's First Exhibition of Community and Participatory Design." *Dialectic*, vol. 2, no. 1, Summer 2018, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3998/dialectic.14932326.0002.107.

Design Workshop Formats

Figure 8: Door to door scenario

The "Door-to-Door" format is a valuable way to build trust with the target population you plan on receiving participatory design input from. This a useful format to use early on in your efforts as it allows for the community you are working with to become familiar with you as well as raise interest in your future activities. You are able to meet people, ask for their contact information and keep them in the loop with the next steps in your project.

Figure 6: Design Event Scenario

Design Workshops are bigger events where you invite as many people as you can to participate in an activity. These workshops give you your first ideas on how your target population is thinking about your project and what you can do to improve upon your plan. Plan for big turnouts but if not, many people attend continue to give all your effort into the people that came to support you.

Figure 7: One on one design scenario

One-on-One Design sessions are helpful for in-depth participation. They allow for better conversation and more detailed ideas from the person you meet with. Typically, these occur after you have created a relationship with some of the people that you have met through other workshop formats. You build upon relationships even further and you are able to hear ideas that give you more information due to the back-and-forth conversation from a one-on-one interaction.

Make Sure all activities are accessible to everyone. Be mindful of different skills, knowledge, and public speaking

Activities do not always come out as you might have expected so be ready to change the schedule as you go

Prioritize conversations over individual activities. If a participant would rather vocalize their ideas rather than do the activity, follow their lead, and continue with conversation

Activity 1:

Memory Box

Memory Box:

The memory box activity asks participants to reflect on past experiences in parks or the area the park is being designed for. This is meant to bring some of those previous experiences and past design features forward into the future design. This activity also can function as an anonymous suggestion box for any other initial ideas that people might already have.

Figure 9: Construction of memory box

It is also important to have a poster with the memory box for people to understand the overall purpose for the box and who created it

Use the submission slips to ask about contact information for future events

To create more context for the memory box, add features that surround the real-life version of your model

The memory box works great as an activity you can leave in different locations for days at a time and if you have group events, you can use it as an ice breaker

Procedure

1. Put the memory box, submission slips and pencils somewhere easily visible
2. Invite participants to come up the box and submit filled out submission slips
3. Once finished, the facilitators can open the box and collect the participatory input

The facilitators should maintain an open dialog with participants during the process to help develop ideas

MATERIALS:
Box
Newspaper
Glue
Paint
Pens
Paper Slips
Poster

TIME: None

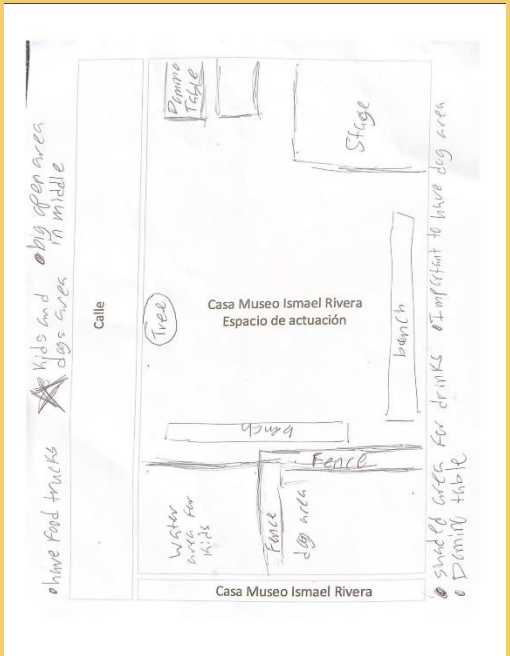
MOST EFFECTIVE FOR:

Design Workshops

One on One Design Sessions

Activity 2:

Participatory Park Mapping



Participatory Park Mapping

During the activity, keep a blank sheet with you if a participant would rather have a conversation about their design ideas so you can draw them out

The blank temple must be the shape of the area you are trying to create a design for, it needs to incorporate surrounding features so participants can understand the orientation of the template. It must also be blank from any design so that the participants' ideas are not influenced by existing features

MATERIALS:
Blank Park Template
Scale Cutouts
Instruction page
Tape or Glue
Scissors
Pens

TIME: 60 MINS

Summary:

The participatory park mapping activity is focused on surveying the community for an ideal layout of the park and specific features that participants would like to see in the designs. This activity works by inviting the participants to fill out blank park templates with their ideal park layout. This allows designers to spot trends in the participant's designs on where features should be located, and which features should be included in the design. This activity can also be run by having participants tell designers how to draw their preferred designs.

Procedure:

1. The facilitator goes over the instructions and speaks to the whole group
2. Blank templates and set of cutouts are handed out to participants
3. The participants are then asked to draw or describe their optimal design
4. After the participants have completed their designs, the facilitators will ask them if they would like to share their designs

TIME: 5 MINS

TIME: 25 MINS

TIME: 30 MINS

MOST EFFECTIVE FOR:

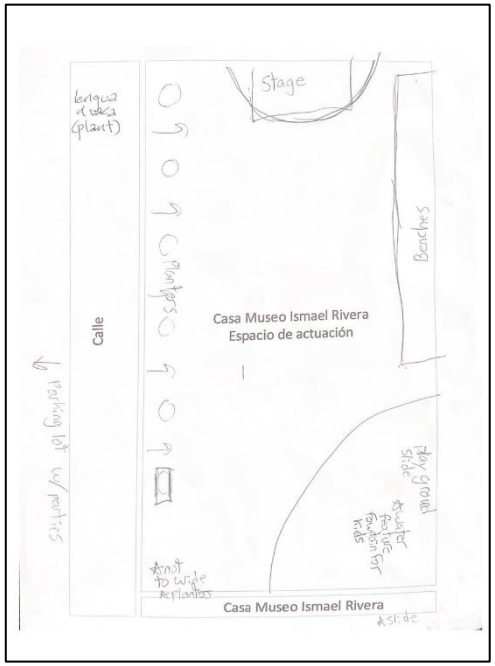


Figure 10: Community made design

Most Importantly these cutouts need to be to scale of the park template and must encompass a wide variety of possible features that participants might want. It is also important to add a blank cutout template for participants who might want to add a feature that was not previously thought of

Activity 3:

Visual Ranking

Image Ranking

A facilitator should keep a notebook ready to write any design input that is said during open dialogue between participants and other facilitators

Facilitators should describe any features that might be difficult to understand along with explanations for its design and placement

MATERIALS:
Design Images
Sticky Notes
Notebook
Pens
Tape

TIME: 60 MINS

MOST EFFECTIVE FOR:

- Door to Door
- Design Workshops
- One on One Design Sessions

Summary:

The image ranking activity is meant to survey the opinions of the community on the designs that have already been created using participatory feedback from previous design events. This activity presents all the current design profiles that have been created by the designers using participatory input. The participants are then asked to vote for which designs they like the most. Facilitators will maintain an open dialog with the participants and explore the reasons why the participants chose the design that they did.

Procedure:

1. Lay out paper with all your designs and its description on a table or flat surface
2. Explain to each participant how to vote for their favorite design using sticky notes — TIME: 5 MINS
3. Have participants vote for their favorite design and explain why they chose that design by writing it down on a sticky note or through conversation — TIME: 25 MINS
4. Once all the votes are in, ask participants what they would add, delete, or improve on the designs — TIME: 30 MINS
5. Thank everyone for their time and their design input

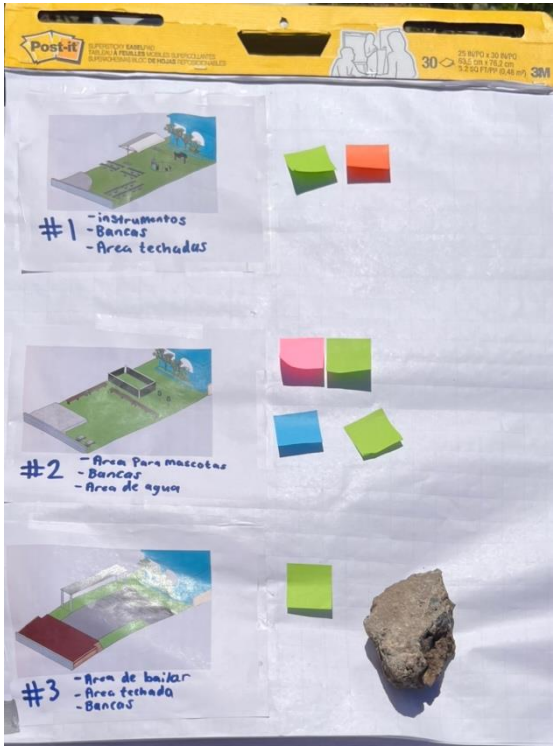
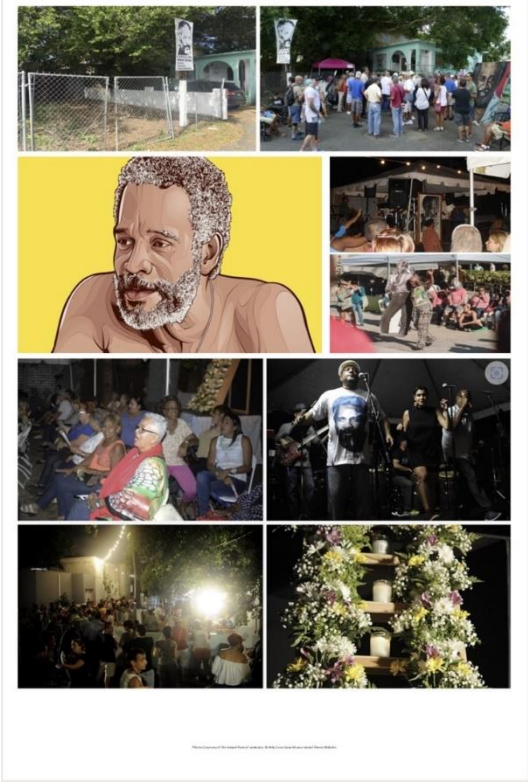


Figure 11: Image ranking results

Tools and Examples

Flyers and Posters

These examples are flyers and posters that were used during the Casa Museo project. They served the purpose of attracting people to events and providing general information.



Memory Box

These materials below are; a photo of the Casa Museo memory box; Casa Museo prompt; and a transition of the Casa Museo prompt.

Memory Box Prompts on Papers:

¿Cuáles son sus recuerdos favoritos de Ismael Rivera, la Casa Museo o eventos en el lote frente a la Casa Museo Ismael Rivera?

¿Qué cosas (mobiliario urbano, eventos, etc.) le gustaría ver en el lote frente a la Casa Museo Ismael Rivera?

Si le gustaría saber de otros eventos de diseño participativo para el lote frente a la Casa Ismael Rivera, por favor deja su nombre y correo electrónico o número de teléfono

¡Gracias!

Translation:

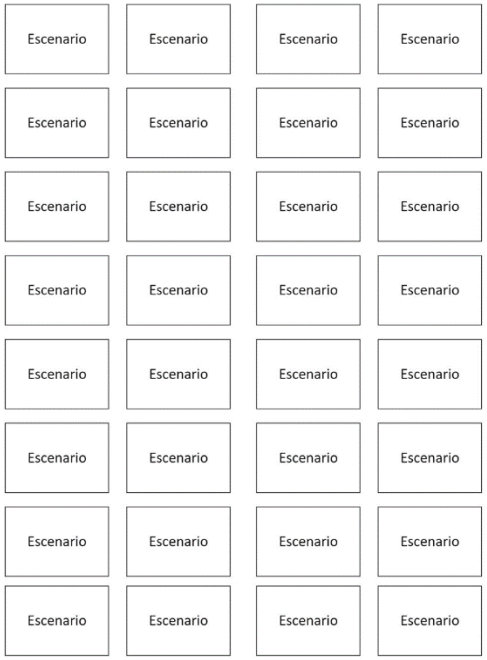
What are your favorites memories of Ismael Rivera, the house museum or events that were held in the yard of the house museum?

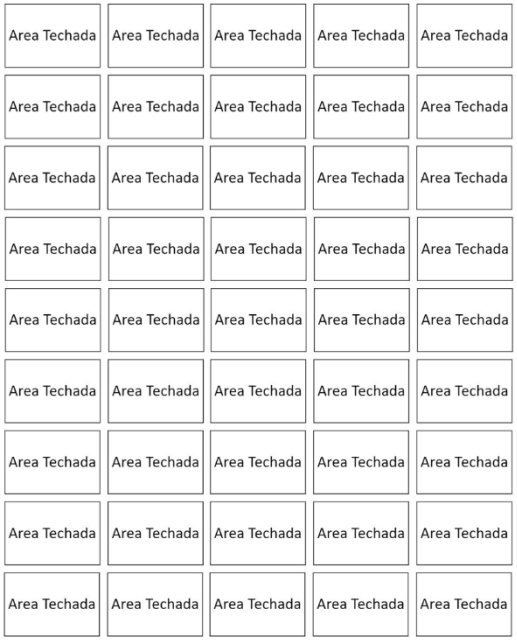
What things would you like to see in the front yard of the house museum?

If you would like to know about any other participatory design events, please leave your name, email or phone number?

Participatory Park Mapping

The materials provided below are the materials created for the participatory mapping activity in the Casa Museo project. They are scale cutouts meant to help participants design their ideal park layouts. There is also a blank template of the Casa Museo lot.

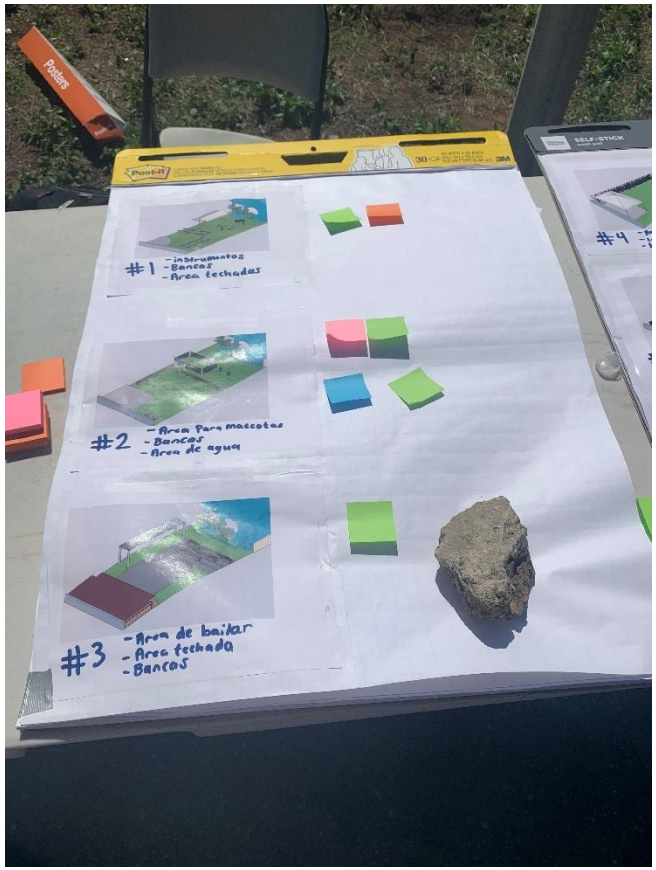




Pista De Baile
Jardineras
Calle
Casa Museo Ismael Rivera
Casa Museo Ismael Rivera
Espacio de actuación

Image Ranking

The following images were recorded at the image ranking event that the Casa Museo project held.



Photos

Photos courtesy of Nate Dixon, Leslie Dodson, Spencer Granlund, Scott Pena and Andrew Sosa