

One Square Mile...

We are often disappointed when an intervention in any one realm – education, health, transportation, employment – fails to yield the results we were seeking. Of course it is hard to increase the educational outcomes of a young person who is still hungry, who is in poor quality child care, whose trip to school requires them to cross dangerous roads, who does not have access to after-school programs, or whose parents are under-employed. So why are we surprised?

What if we tried to “move the needle” by taking a different approach? Let’s take a concentrated area – One Square Mile – and try to address everything! Will that make the needle move?

Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions’ Maryvale One Square Mile Initiative is the opportunity to answer that question.

Located several miles northwest of downtown Phoenix, Maryvale is the most populous of the city’s 13 “villages” with over 200,000 residents. If it were a municipality, it would be the 8th largest in Arizona.

This economically and culturally diverse community emerged from beginnings as the first planned community in Arizona – made up of 25,000 affordable family homes. Today, Maryvale is a young, diverse, affordable community with many positive attributes and more than a few needs. It has the lowest median age of any village in the city of Phoenix. It

also has the second highest percentage of residents living below the poverty line, and lower test scores and education levels than much of Phoenix overall.

We are mustering the talent and ingenuity of faculty and students across ASU to focus on the same geographic area – working together on not just one aspect of that area, but on the interconnected web of education, health, employment, transport, environment, civic engagement, local leadership and more.

This is about more than coordinating university efforts. First and foremost, this means community ownership of the work. We are assisting with the coordination and cooperation of many efforts already underway in the community to give them more potency.

Together we are testing a hypothesis: if you really want to reverse the fortune of a community, you must treat it as a whole, in all its complexity. By working with the community of the One Square Mile, we intend to show how a university, as an institution, can be an agent for positive transformation.

– Dean Jonathan Koppell



Design Studio for Community Solutions



Harnessing the power of ASU to activate community-generated solutions

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“What if we tried to ‘move the needle’ by taking a different approach?”

The Design Studio for Community Solutions

The Design Studio for Community Solutions (DSCS) is a new initiative of Arizona State University's Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions that partners with local stakeholders to devise practical solutions to complex issues. Drawing upon ASU and community resources – and bringing research, student engagement and leadership to bear – DSCS (pronounced “discus”) serves as a vehicle to stimulate and activate co-generated solutions in our communities.



The Concept

Challenges like homelessness, educational inequity, mental illness, displacement and gentrification are not conquered with theory alone, nor by testing solutions in a laboratory. Neither are they solved without understanding the complex interactions between people, agencies and businesses that populate our neighborhoods. By incorporating the economic, cultural, social and civic dimensions of community life, we can derive answers that make sense for each place.



DSCS operates on the premise that communities thrive when solutions to their challenges are generated from the ground up; that by working together, encouraging and augmenting local efforts and resources, we can produce lasting change.

Watts College is creating DSCS to be a powerful tool in the hands of communities: one that makes an array of resources – mobilized from across the university – available to support local efforts with a problem-solving approach.

Our vision involves harnessing the capacity of ASU academic units and students in the arts, business, planning, engineering, health, teaching, nursing and economics, among other disciplines, and connecting them to support civic leaders at all levels, including municipal and service organizations, community-based agencies and local coalitions. Understanding that neither problems nor their solutions follow jurisdictions or boundaries, DSCS serves as a vehicle to drive joint action.

Simply put, our design studio offers a space where collaborators can develop and test impactful, novel and creative solutions for specific community challenges, prototyping new remedies until the best approach is found.

DSCS operates with the following aspirations:

- Amplify community voice
- Develop enduring solutions
- Leverage community assets
- Improve residents' lives
- Seek achievable/attainable results



When we say **design**, we mean. . .

Beyond just physical place and the built environment, a thriving community has a road map for the future of its children and elders, economic growth, housing stability, social cohesion and inclusion, and neighborhood identity. To generate solutions to complex issues, we have to account for the totality of factors that shape neighborhoods and communities. More than that, we have to account for the interconnectedness of the many dimensions of community life. We overcome the silos of systems, services and disciplines by taking an ecological approach that puts the person at the center. We view people in the context of their relationships with family, community services and their environment, and use that ecological model to better understand their experiences.

Community members don't look at problems in silos and neither should we.

When we say **studio**, we mean. . .

We match the resources of a tier-one research university with partners throughout the Phoenix metropolitan region to conduct rapid experimentation. Here, we develop applied solutions – then shape, test and reshape them in an iterative fashion. This approach allows us to be experimental, push boundaries and be inclusive while we pursue aspirations for stronger, more vibrant communities.

When we say **community**, we mean. . .

Community is defined as “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.”

Using an approach aimed at cultivating the voice of lived-experience from residents, teachers, front-line staff from community-based organizations and others, we seek to encourage the input and investment that are critical to developing effective solutions. To use a cliché, the best collaborations “move at the speed of trust,” and we are committed to this approach.

We believe the informed voice of the community should be central to any effort that is intended to solve communal problems.

When we say **solutions**, we mean. . .

By leveraging partnerships within ASU and the community, DSCS co-produces customized answers to local challenges that citizens and stakeholder organizations have prioritized.

Some challenges are relatively small – such as the need for shade structures in a local park. Some are more daunting, like the escalation of pedestrian fatalities in Phoenix, the lack of affordable access to after-school youth activities in Maryvale and how to promote equitable and sustainable development in areas of opportunity. Solutions can involve strategic deployment of ASU students and programs, community coalition activation, visual mapping tools, asset maps, issue analyses, quick-turn-around research on specific issues, prototypes for physical and digital infrastructure challenges, health and wellbeing practices and more.

“The best collaborations **‘move at the speed of trust’**”