# Co-designing pathways to an anti-racist future

Principles and strategies for making the Forest Preserves of Cook County safer and more accessible for BIPOC visitors.

# Co-designing pathways to an anti-racist future

This is the second (and culminating) report authored by graduate students at IIT's Institute of Design who were enrolled in the 2021-2022 Co-Design and Social Interventions Workshop led by Professor Chris Rudd and André Nogueira. This report is the final deliverable for the workshop's spring cohort.

Building upon research conducted in the fall section of the course that highlighted safety and transportation as key barriers Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) residents of Cook County face in accessing natural spaces, students in the spring cohort held codesign workshops around these two themes. In total, four co-design workshops were held with 12 BIPOC residents. The ideas from these workshops led to a set of design strategies and principles.

On May 4, 2022 we presented the results of our work to our partners at the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC.) We hope that these ideas will be used to guide future programming and policy-making at the FPCC, and we believe that their use will lead to a more equitable and inclusive future.

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**BIPOC safety:** How does your mode of transport promote and ensure safety for BIPOC people?

Section I

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**Background and History** 

**Context for the Report** 

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- access to food and
- Storage (Maybe
- Discounts, Copon



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mobile app

· easy to connect
· schedule for



### **Background and History**

For this project, students partnered with the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) and focused on how to make outdoor environments more accessible, equitable, and inclusive for BIPOC folks. FPCC wanted to understand how to increase BIPOC visitorship at the Forest Preserve. They came to us with the questions: "How do we increase the number of BIPOC folks who volunteer and engage with the Forest Preserves?" and "How do we increase their level of comfort and inclusion in the space?" We used these questions and FPCC's willingness to engage in this important work as an opportunity to codesign pathways to a more equitable Forest Preserve.

Throughout American history, BIPOC folks have been systematically excluded from natural spaces – and they still are today. This section outlines several political and social mechanisms through which this exclusion has been perpetrated in Cook County.

### Redlining

BIPOC home-owners were excluded from services that would enable them to purchase property in neighborhoods near natural spaces. In turn, 'White flight' to the suburbs gave White people greater access to the Forest Preserves.

### **Transportation**

Limited public transportation options compound the inaccessibility of green spaces for BIPOC residents.

The CTA did not (and still does not) connect many BIPOC neighborhoods to the Forest Preserves, which makes traveling to the Forest Preserve an expensive, time-intensive, and near Herculean task for BIPOC folks who do not own cars.

### Violence and Policing

Historical – and present day – racial profiling and discriminatory policing practices leave many BIPOC folks afraid of being attacked in natural spaces. They also are concerned about being harassed by police when commuting through white neighborhoods en route to the Forest Preserve.

### **Unsafe Neighborhoods**

Even in their own neighborhoods, BIPOC people face barriers to engaging in outdoor activities. The more that developers have disinvested from BIPOC neighborhoods, the less safe it has become for residents to spend time outdoors.

### **Context for the Report**

Students in the fall conducted extensive research to better understand why BIPOC visitorship to the Forest Preserves of Cook County is low.

Their research included staff interviews, on-site observations, and a series of co-design workshops.

Of the many physical, sociocultural, historical, and economic barriers that prevent BIPOC folks from visiting natural spaces, they highlighted the following four as being amongst the most salient:

- Racial targeting and hate crimes
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of preparation and equipment
- Lack of diversity

In January 2022, we picked up where our colleagues left off. After reviewing their work, we decided to focus on two barriers: safety and transportation. We split into two teams and each team crafted a more focused problem statement to explore throughout the spring semester:

Safety Team's Guiding Question:

"How might FPCC make BIPOC folks feel safe and welcome in the Forest Preserve so that BIPOC folks can safely enjoy nature?"

Transportation Team's Guiding Question:

"How might FPCC make access to outdoor natural spaces a more safe, reliable, and inclusive experience for BIPOC folks?"

\* POEMS

Constraints

Section II

Process and Methodology Workshop Outcomes

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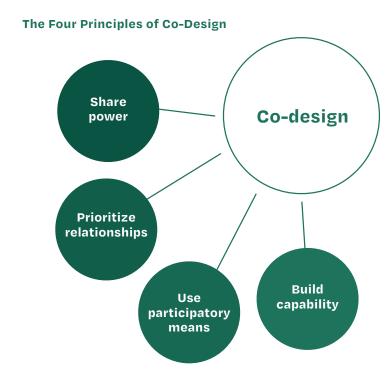
Easy havigation. Where to hike

## We used a process called co-design to guide our work.

"[co-design is] an approach to designing with, not for, people. ... It typically works best where people with lived experience, communities and professionals work together to improve something that they all care about. Overall, the primary role of co-design is elevating the voices and contributions of people with lived experience."

### -Kelly Ann McKercher,

Beyond Sticky Notes: CoDesign for Real: Mindsets, Methods and Movements





# Co-design addresses legacies of injustice & exclusion

by centering BIPOC folks' experiences, expertise, history, and perspectives.

# Creates the best and most viable solutions

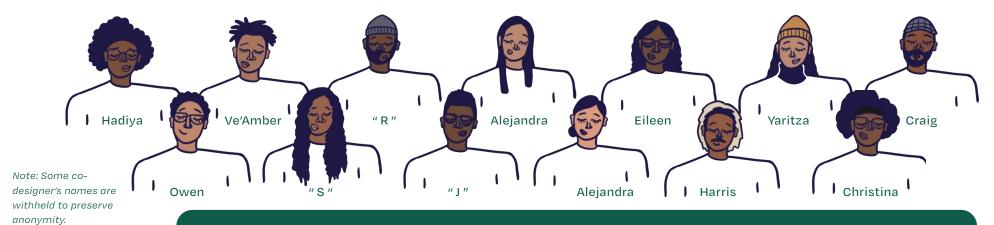
by inviting those with the most lived experience of the problem to lead the design process.

# Shifts existing power structures

by shifting unequal economic power structures away from a system of gross injustice and towards a more equitable system.

### **Workshop Outcomes**

We conducted four co-design workshops in the Spring of 2022. Twelve co-designers participated in the workshops.



At each workshop, co-designers shared their personal experiences and developed physical prototypes. These prototypes embodied the co-designers' lived expertise, values, and priorities and were one of the main sources of data we used to derive our findings.

**Workshop Themes** 

Safety Workshop 1

**Defining & Creating BIPOC Safety at FPCC** 

Safety Workshop 2

**Developing an Infrastructure for BIPOC Safety at FPCC** 

Transportation Workshop 1

**Defining & Addressing Transportation Challenges** 

Transportation Workshop 2

**Creating a BIPOC-centered Transportation System** 

Workshop Prototypes

BIPOC-identity Art Kit for Kids Seed and Education Station BIPOC-led Social Media Campaign BIPOC-focused marketing campaign
Social Media app to connect with community and FPCC
Rideshare app for getting to FPCC
Bus-based BIPOC transportation system
Train-based BIPOC transportation system





# **An Equitable and Inclusive Forest Preserve**

Forest Preserves of Cook County's Mission is as stated:

"To acquire, restore and manage lands for the purpose of protecting and preserving public open space with its natural wonders, significant prairies, forests, wetlands, rivers, streams, and other landscapes with all of its associated wildlife, in a natural state for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public now and in the future."

The term "public" is used twice in this statement. However, for all of the reasons explored above, BIPOC folks do not share the same access to the Forest Preserve as White folks do. FPCC must do more to fulfill its mission for the entire public.

A clear vision of an equitable and inclusive Forest Preserve crystallized over the course of our four Co-Design workshops, which we believe will help FPCC achieve its mission for the entire public.

Our co-design workshops focused on two aspects of this vision in particular - safety and transportation - and identified paths forward in each area as a result of synthesis from each workshop. We crafted a vision statement for each area, which we think of as a North Star. The remainder of this section provides pathways for achieving these desired outcomes.



# Equity and inclusion are more than equality.

### **Equality**

Giving each individual or group of people the same resources and opportunities, regardless of their circumstances. Source

### Equity

Meeting communities where they are and allocating resources and opportunities as needed to create equal outcomes for all community members. Source

### Inclusion

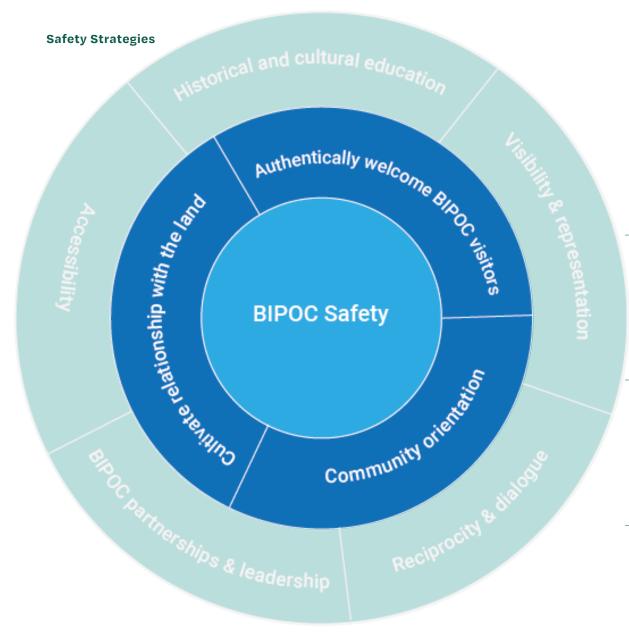
Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power. Source

Safety Vision

We envision a Forest Preserve where BIPOC folks are seen and welcome, relaxed and connected.

Transportation Vision

We envision a system that makes transportation to the Forest Preserves of Cook County more possible and desirable for BIPOC folks.



Strategy 1

### **Cultivate Relationship with the Land**

BIPOC folks cultivate a nourishing relationship with the land.

Strategy 2

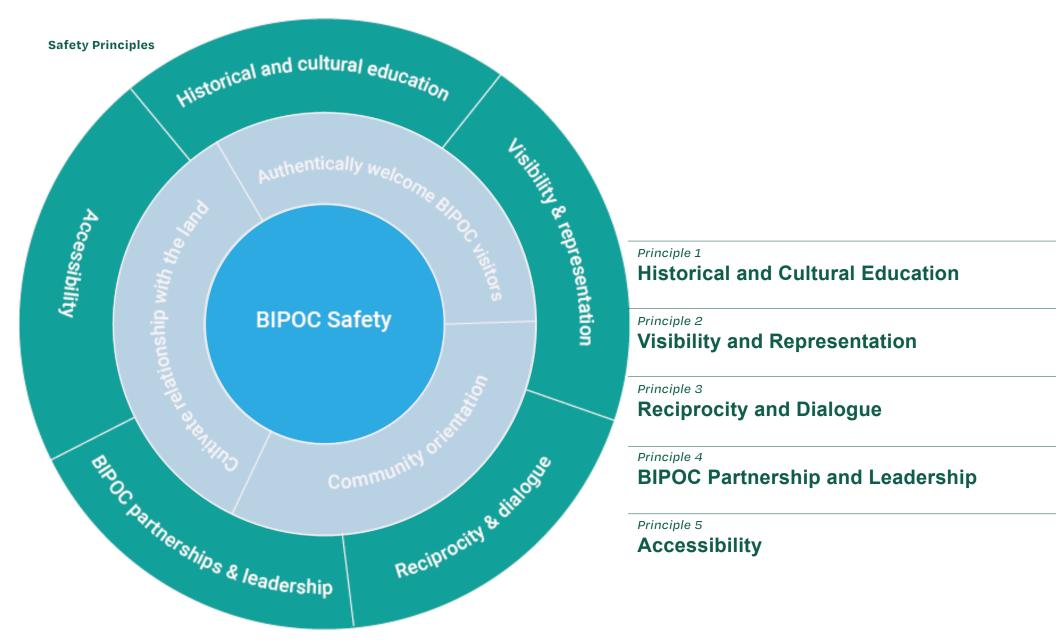
### **Authentically Welcome BIPOC Visitors**

BIPOC folks are seen, welcome, and wanted in the Forest Preserve.

Strategy 3

### **Community-orientation**

Future FPCC initiatives, policies, programs, etc. strengthen – and draw upon the strength of – BIPOC communities and existing networks.





### **Historical and Cultural Education**

Educate all visitors about the historical connection between BIPOC communities and the land.

Insight

Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

BIPOC safety is created when knowledge about the historical and cultural connection between BIPOC communities and nature/the land is shared.

"I think education is a good access point for people, especially BIPOC communities where communities have been disenfranchised for so long. Having this kind of access is necessary."

"It's about bringing the past into the future."

"Education and knowledge make me feel safe."

BIPOC safety is created when historical oppression and injustice against BIPOC communities is acknowledged and taught. "Acknowledge the history."

"To BIPOC folks, this is stolen land. This is land that needs more education. When you have more access to education and information, the more connected you feel to it and the more safe you'll feel."

BIPOC safety is created when ALL (BIPOC and non-BIPOC) visitors are educated about BIPOC history and acknowledge BIPOC belonging in natural spaces.

"It's all about sharing knowledge and letting everybody know we all belong. We are all valuable."

"Focusing on increasing education on the history of BIPOC people in the Forest Preserve is important to me."

# I want to see people who look like me.

### **Visibility and Representation**

Increase BIPOC folks' visibility and representation in nature.

Insight	Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

BIPOC folks feel safe when they see themselves (and "people who look like me") reflected at their environments "I need to see people who look like me in a space to feel safe."

"If I can see myself or my ancestors in that space, I can say, 'I belong there. I feel safe.' "

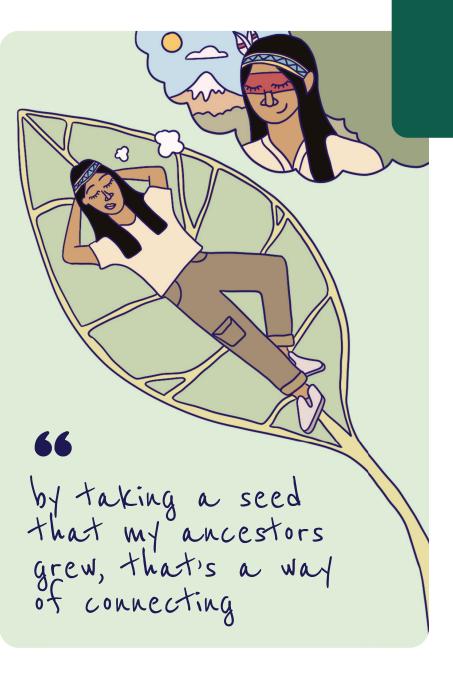
Representation refers to both the demographics of visitors/staff and also to BIPOC presence in digital messaging, physical signage, and programming "There should be a lot of marketing specifically for BIPOC people. This could be social media, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram. You have influencers showing the land and showing the history. Letting everybody know we all belong."

"I feel welcome when there is art, signage and symbols that suggest I belong (e.g. black power symbol)."

BIPOC safety is created by inclusive and welcoming messaging that explicitly acknowledges aspects of BIPOC identity "FPCC could be more antiracist by communicating that my identity matters to them."

"I want to feel like someone took the time to think about someone who looks like me visiting."

"Center the PERSON in your messaging. Make BIPOC people feel seen and heard."



### **Reciprocity and Dialogue**

Create ways for BIPOC visitors to be in relationship with the land.

Insight

Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

BIPOC folks want to physically interact with the Forest Preserve – and be in conversation with others.

"Let kids know they belong by letting them leave a mark of their identity behind in the forest."

"You could leave a question or a comment on someone else's art, then come back and see what people had said about your art"

"Have kids make an object and share a story about it for when people find it."

"I'm not going to feel safe anywhere that I can't see myself being. Even by taking a seed that my ancestors grew, that's a way of connecting and making me feel safe."

Identity-focused art can create a sense of safety for BIPOC folks.

"What if there was a BIPOC photography exhibit in the info center created by BIPOC artists?"

"There was this park where a woman was raped, but then people from the community 'took it back' by creating art there. And that made it feel safe again."



### **BIPOC Partnerships and Leadership**

Create authentic partnerships and networks with BIPOC-focused and BIPOC-led organizations through power sharing and decision-making.

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Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

Information gains legitimacy in the BIPOC community when it comes from a BIPOC source.

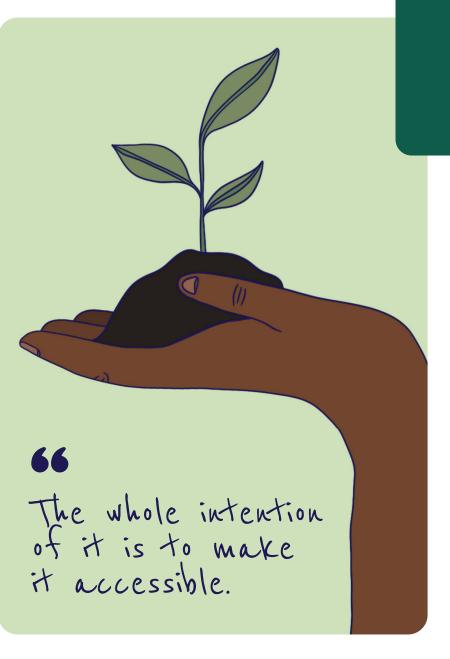
"Let BIPOC lead this project."

"BIPOC people should be at the forefront of any initiatives geared toward BIPOC people."

"The Forest Preserve could pay influencers or others from communities and give them a platform and space for their voice. It's not the Forest Preserve's message. FPCC are facilitators, not implementers."

BIPOC folks have pre-existing relationships with organizations that are more accessible to them and that are BIPOC-focused.

"Work with other organizations (e.g. DuSable Museum, Woke Yoga.) There could be cross pollination between orgs/communities."



### **Accessibility**

Meet BIPOC folks where they are at (geographically and emotionally) by increasing (physical and emotional) access points and bringing the Forest Preserve to BIPOC communities.

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Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

Messaging around belonging and safety needs to start before the visit.

"What is the FP doing to educate people that they'll be safe there and to help them see themselves being reflected in the environment before they even think about going?"

"Before you get there, we want to entice people. So what happens before is there should be a lot of marketing."

Opportunities for BIPOC visitors to extend their experiences when they are back at home increase impact.

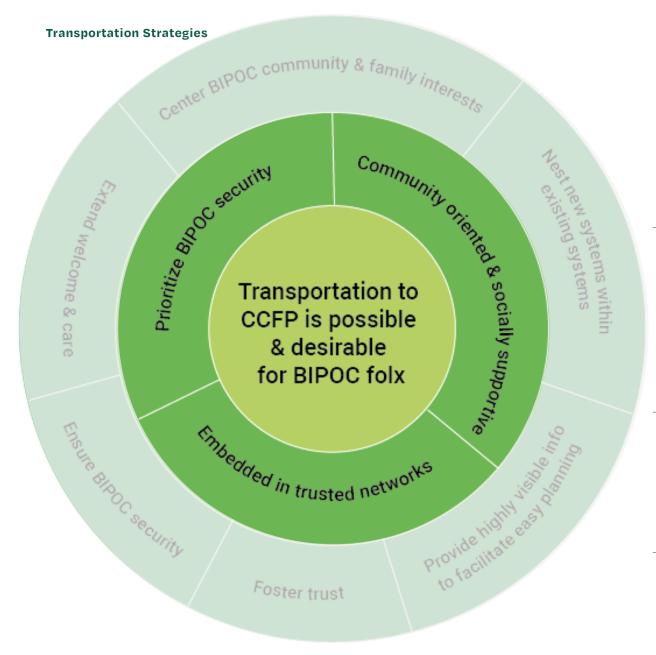
"I think the extension part is probably the most impactful point. Having that little token to take home and plant within their own communities and their own like homes is probably the most impactful part, you want to leave them with, like a lasting impression of FPCC, especially for BIPOC communities."

When it comes to designing for BIPOC folks, having an intentional focus on accessibility is essential.

"The whole intention of it is to make it accessible."

"The seed station could be next to the parking lot so you don't have to go into the Forest Preserve to access it."

"The seeds need to be free and the station should be unmanned because if someone is there I might not feel comfortable getting a free seed."



### Strategy 1

# Community-oriented and Socially Supportive

Transportation systems reflect the needs and priorities of BIPOC individuals, families and communities.

In addition, they must be authentically welcoming to BIPOC communities.

### Strategy 2

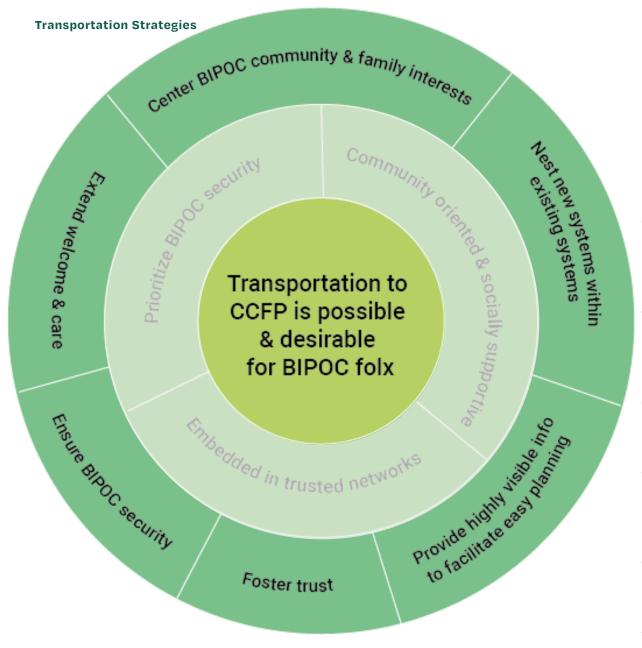
### **Embedded within Trusted Networks**

Transportation systems and services ensure BIPOC safety and security when they connect to pre-established social networks and organizations.

### Strategy 3

### **Prioritize BIPOC Safety and Security**

Transportation systems must prioritize security for BIPOC folks in the form of emotional, psychological, financial and physical security.



Principle 1

# **Center BIPOC Community and Family Interests**

Principle 2

**Provide Highly Visible Information** to Facilitate Easy Planning

Principle 3

**Foster Trust** 

Principle 4

Nest New Systems within Existing Systems

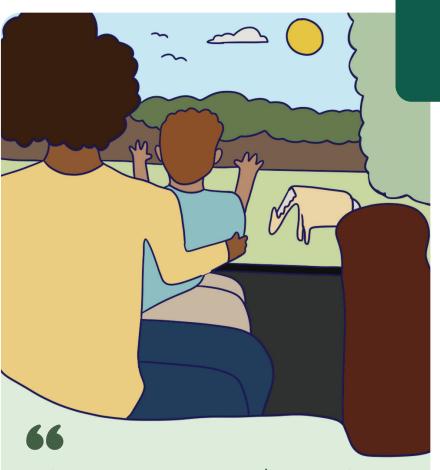
Principle 5

**Ensure BIPOC Security** 

Principle 6

**Extend Welcome and Care** 

### **Transportation Principle 1**



What we wanted is that it's safe, that it's community oriented, family center, sustainable

# **Center BIPOC Community and Family Interests**

Ensure a safe and comfortable experience that is family and community centered.

Insight

Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

Transportation to and from FPCC would be more desirable for BIPOC folks if it was family and community oriented.

"We have thought of...some amenities within the train... family bathrooms, ...dedicated changing stations or rooms for smaller kids... Unisex bathrooms, access to food and drinks for families."

"What we wanted is that it's safe, that it's community oriented, family-centered, sustainable...reliable... connecting and affordable."

Transportation to FPCC for BIPOC folks becomes more possible and desirable when programs are low-cost, free and/or discounted.

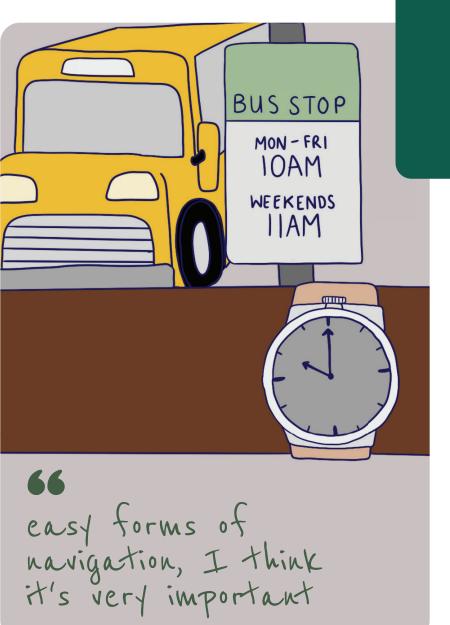
"[It's important to have] special coupons, promos, family cards...REI was maybe sort of the model that we were looking at. REI has a program that takes groups of individuals into nature."

"Discounts, coupons, family cards, [are all] ways to reduce the cost for families."

Visiting FPCC would be more desirable to BIPOC folks if FPCC launched a marketing campaign emphasizing the wonders of nature, culture, safety, and family.

"I think a lot of...problems about inclusivity can be solved by...having enough information. So I think a marketing plan could be a very effective way to remove that kind of low...familiarity."

"FPCC invitation needs to raise the volume, to highlight the culture, the safety, the family."



# Provide Highly Visible Information to Facilitate Easy Planning

Ease the burden of planning for BIPOC folks by making information to assist with trip planning, gear rental and equipment storage available and visible.

Insight

Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

BIPOC folks want to have a sense of who else would be commuting with them and who else would be at the Forest Preserve.

"[I would want to see a] guest list, or number of attendees...for ride shares."

"[I would want to] see who's on the guest list...No photos, but maybe just name so that you know the number of people that are attending. So you feel like you're not the only one on the bus or the train."

Departures and arrivals schedules would need to be highly visible and clear to support transportation to FPCC for BIPOC folks.

"One of the biggest ideas that emerged was having access to some sort of mobile app so that you can see the schedules for the arrivals and departures."

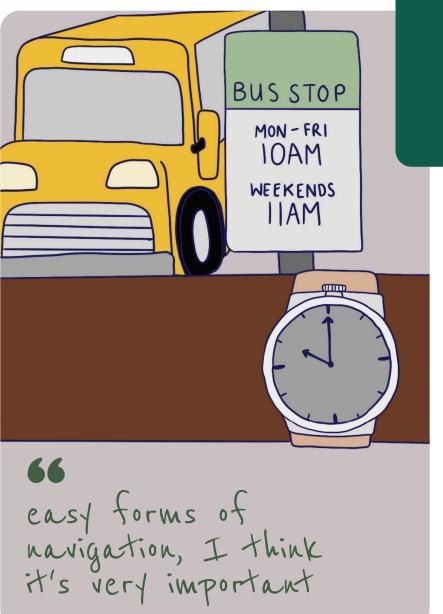
"[When you] see advertisements like, 'Plan your visit to the dunes or Lake Michigan...,' [it] felt...accessible, where you can have, entire schedules that are there, and how to plan your visit and everything."

BIPOC folks would be more likely to visit FPCC if they were able to see photos and information about what to expect at the park in advance -- and if these photos showed other BIPOC folks enjoying the park.

"Maybe there are some genuine pictures of people of color enjoying these spaces."

"[We want information around] where to hike safely and a lot of wayfinding. Tons of wayfinding."

"But once you get there, like, what can I do?"



# Provide Highly Visible Information to Facilitate Easy Planning

Ease the burden of planning for BIPOC folks by making information to assist with trip planning, gear rental and equipment storage available and visible.

Insight

Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when trip planning information is easy to access.

"It's not clear enough in terms of how I'm going to make the actual journey. [It] needs more structure so that it's easier to plan and easier to get there."

"But maybe the directions are already provided, or there's a way that you can already see. Not just me looking on my own, but like through their app, [what are] my options to get there, already. So that takes some of that anxiety."

BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when there are systems for gear storage and equipment rental.

"Especially as someone who doesn't have a car...it is even harder to bring stuff."

"I thought that we could make visible what gear is available already at the park so that you don't feel overwhelmed having to bring all the things that you might need."

BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when there are easy ways to coordinate and share resources for getting to the park.

"[Our transportation prototype] includes asking everyone: 'So how do you think you'll get there?' So a family could post a picture of like, 'This is my family, and we're going in our van, and we have one space,' or 'We have two spaces in our van for someone else that needs a carpool! It could be a carpooling option."

### **Transportation Principle 3**



### **Foster Trust**

Offer services that are for BIPOC folks, by BIPOC folks and build upon existing social networks of trust.

Insight	Quotes from BIPOC co-designers
BIPOC folks want trusted social contacts to be able to vouch for FPCC.	"Who's someone that you know, and trust, who can like vouch for this experience?"  "When you go for events, you can see where people in your groupsaid 'I'm going [to be] at a concert too' or 'I'm going there.' You can see who's connected in your social media circles that might utilize some of these spaces."
BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when these systems are run and managed by BIPOC folks, for BIPOC folks.	"By BIPOC people, for BIPOC people. That's a necessary element in having a mode of transportation."  "You don't want to just like, have a whole bunch of White staff. You want to have, you know, people who look like you, who are on the bus."  "These systems are being run and managed by the BIPOC

community."

we'll feel safe to go there."

"[We] want to see ourselves in the people there, then



places in the community that the most people go to

# Nest New Systems Within Existing Systems

Grow from current community hubs and effectively partner with existing service providers.

Insight

Quotes from BIPOC co-designers

BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when the transportation system fills gaps in the current public transportation infrastructure.

"Let BIPOC lead this project."

"BIPOC people should be at the forefront of any initiatives geared toward BIPOC people."

"But still, we were thinking of something connecting, maybe connecting the limited transportation that's already in the area."

BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when the transportation system is complementary to existing community infrastructure.

"We want those more advanced bus stops [at] the places in the community that the most people go to. So like, if there's a church that everybody goes to, it should be close to there, or like a grocery store, or some kind of place that everybody in that community goes to. And it should be frequent."

BIPOC transportation to FPCC becomes more possible & desirable when it exists within a network of partnerships with other transportation providers and BIPOC-led organizations.

"I know, for me, and other black people Metra is a good feel[ing]. It's connected, because it allows people that are working in the suburbs or live outside of the city, a comfortable ride. There is less stress. It's not the craziness of the city."

"We were thinking of a train, or a tram, or sort of like an extension of maybe the metra or the CTA."

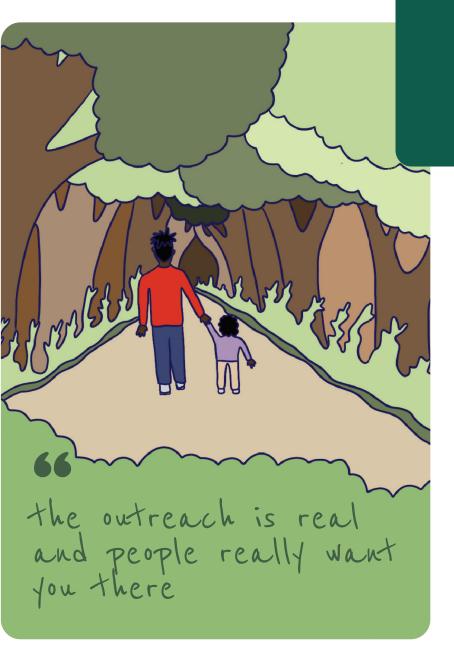
"Thinking around other agencies, other people to connect with. That could be apart of it."



### **Ensure BIPOC Security**

Establish on-site, BIPOC community-led security systems.

Insights	Quotes from BIPOC co-designers
Security systems that are run by police do not feel safe for BIPOC folks.	"On site security is very important. But not cops."  "We wanted to have camera access, or security on site.  Not police, but having individuals who are part of an organization that's external to FPCC"
BIPOC folks want an on-site system to communicate concerns about hate crimes and emergencies.	"[We want] a system to manage hate crimes, investigate things that might be harmful for the BIPOC."  "We talked about emergency alarms and systems on the train itself."  "[We want] easy ways to communicate concerns."



### **Extend Welcome and Care**

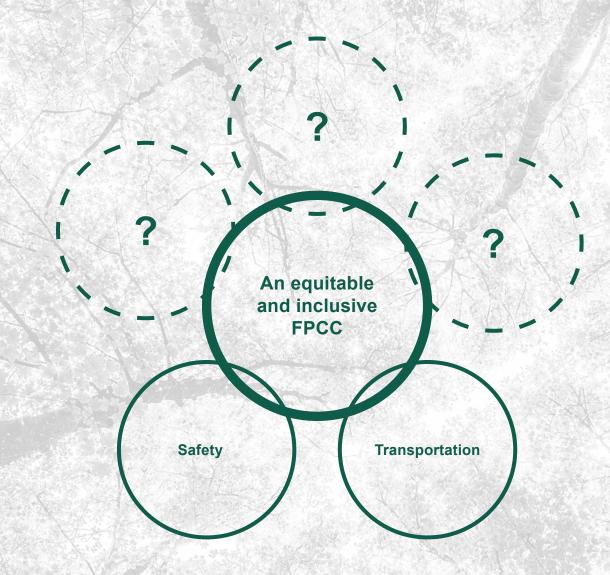
Provide transportation services that feel special, modern, and authentically welcoming to BIPOC folks.

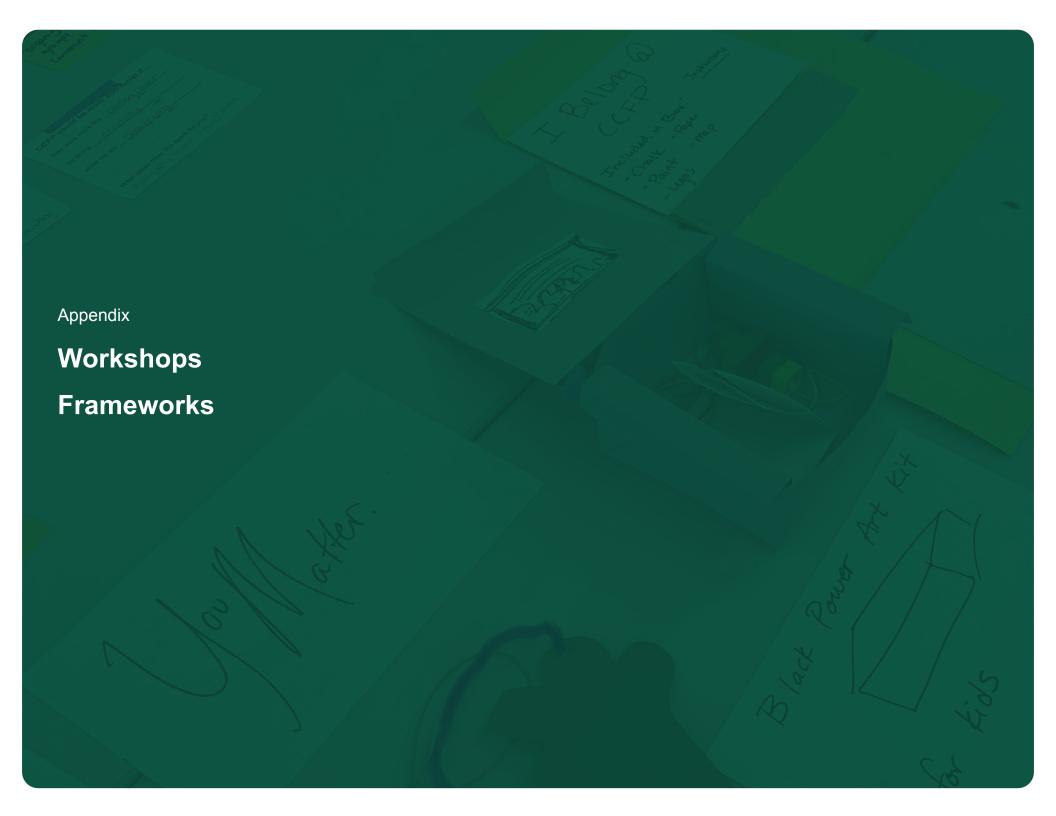
Insights	Quotes from BIPOC co-designers
BIPOC folks want a transportation system that feels special, welcoming, and modern.	"[It might be] like a shuttle bus that will go through whatever neighborhoods and it'll have FPCC [logo] on there. And maybe nature's things and [it will say] 'You are welcome' which will be very colorful. And it will be electric."
	"[FPCC] could have dedicated bus stops just for this bus that maybe wasn't how CTA islike some kind of shack."
	"There could be QR codes on the bus."
BIPOC folks want to feel authentically cared for and welcomed.	"[I would like it] if you got mailed a super nice invitation and then you got a call about [it] and you got an email about it. Just the frequency of the outreach means the outreach is real and people really want you there instead of just saying, 'Go to my website', and they just got to figure it out."
	"We're talking about transportation through the lens of authentic welcoming."
BIPOC folks want to feel calm, safe, and connected [a sense of community] en route to the FPCC.	"Safe spaces fornot just for women, but also anybody who just feels likethey don't feel safe. They have a space to go to."
	"I think it was a key take[away] stay calm and stay connected."
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### **A Pathway Forward**

In this section, we outline a pathway toward achieving a more equitable and inclusive FPCC. This pathway consists of strategies and principles for achieving this vision by focusing on safety and transportation. Though the topics safety and transportation were presented separately, we want to underscore how connected these two issues are. Achieving safety isn't enough if the Forest Preserve remains inaccessible to BIPOC folks. Similarly, creating an accessible but unsafe Forest Preserve is not sufficient. These visions must be pursued simultaneously.

At the same time, we want to acknowledge that these are by no means the only components of equity and inclusion. Our team only had the capacity to focus on these two issues; there are many areas we were unable to explore. For example, "lack of preparedness" is another barrier that prevents BIPOC folks from equitably enjoying FPCC. We encourage FPCC to continue filling in the pieces of this puzzle.





### **Appendix: Workshops**







# How might the Forest Preserves of Cook County make BIPOC folks feel safe and welcome so that BIPOC folks can safely enjoy nature?

### SUMMARY

Safety Workshop 1:

**Defining & Creating Safety at FPCC** 

Safety Workshop 2:

**Advancing Definitions of Safety** 

In the safety workshop the BIPOC co-designers developed prototypes to address the issue of safety in the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Each workshop began by defining what safety means as BIPOC residents of Cook County. Once all co-designers were grounded in this shared definition of safety, they began to ideate solutions that would make them feel safe at Forest Preserves of Cook County.

### **KEY INSIGHTS**

- Safety means more than safe from physical harm, it's about maximizing comfort for BIPOC visitors.
- -Safety is achieved when ALL (BIPOC and non-BIPOC) visitors are educated about BIPOC history and acknowledge BIPOC belonging in natural spaces.

### **FRAMEWORKS**

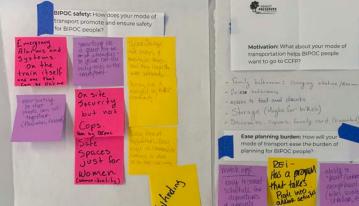
**POEMS** 

Five Es

I Like, I Wish, I Wonder

### **Appendix: Workshops**







# How might the Forest Preserves of Cook County make access to outdoor natural spaces a more safe, reliable, and inclusive experience for BIPOC folks?

### SUMMARY

Transportation Workshop 1:

Defining & Addressing Transportation Challenges
Transportation Workshop 2:

Creating a BIPOC-Centered Transportation System

During the transportation workshops, BIPOC co-designers were invited to use their expertise to design and reimagine the infrastructures that support travel to the FPCC. Co-designers developed new visions of transforming travel to natural spaces into a special community-building experience by sharing apprehensions and designing new transportation infrastructures and principles to overcome these obstacles.

### **KEY INSIGHTS**

- Easing the burden of planning by making information, gear rental, and equipment storage easily available and visible makes BIPOC folks feel that transportation to the FPCC is more possible.
- -Transportation to FPCC becomes more desirable when these systems are run and managed by BIPOC folks, for BIPOC folks.

### **FRAMEWORKS**

**POEMS** 

Five Es

Design Principles Framework

### **POEMS**

POEMS is an observational framework used to make sense of the elements present in a context.

The five elements are: People, Objects, Environments, Messages, and Services. Application of the POEMS framework encourages researchers and designers to examine these elements independently as well as an interrelated system.

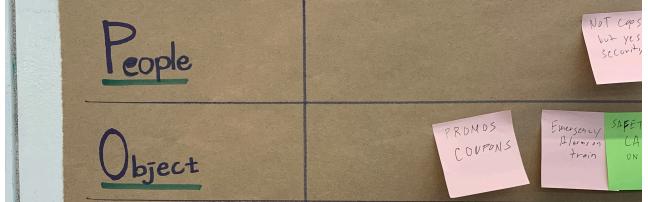
### 5 Es

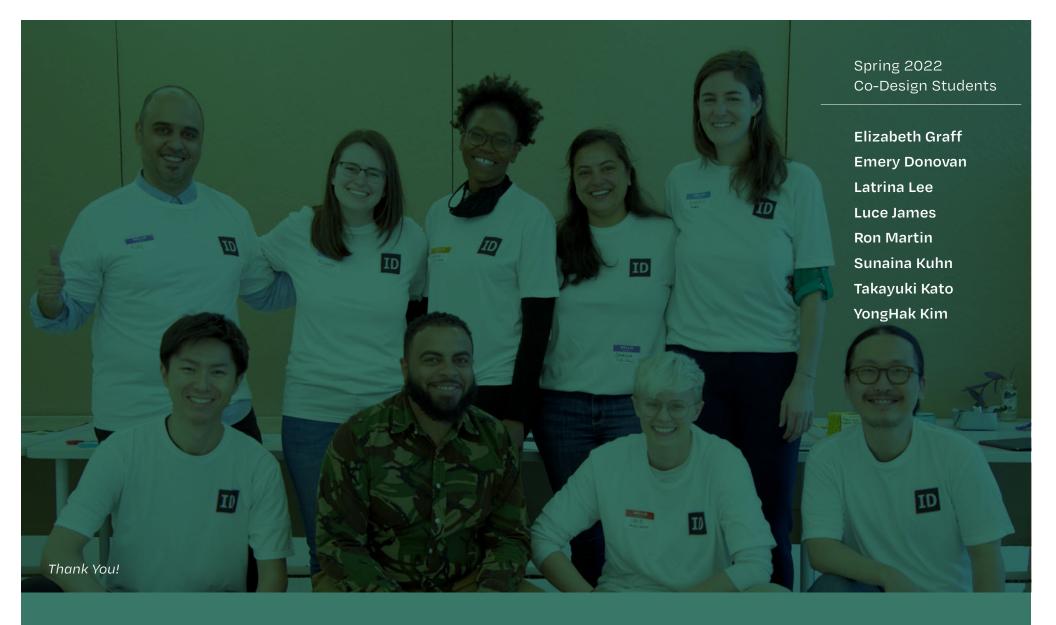
The Five Es is an observational framework which maps the five stages of an experience that users go through. The five stages are: Entice, Enter, Engage, Exit, and Extend. The Five Es framework helps designers examine and map each stage of the intended offering/experience.

### I like, I wish, I wonder

This is a tool that helps designers examine, develop and map each stage of the intended offering/experience. For example, a team looking for feedback on a new program might use "I like, I wish, I wonder" to gather feedback.









For building anti-racist pathways moving forward.

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