Communicating the Wellbeing of a City with Santa Monica.

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Aknowledgements.
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Context.
At the core of The Wellbeing Project is the Wellbeing Index, a measurement tool that provides an understanding of community wellbeing in Santa Monica, CA. The index combines available data, determines what new types of data should be gathered, and integrates in new ways all of the available information in order to shape effective future policy.
The project.
Student teams worked alongside Santa Monica civic leaders to translate the City of Santa Monica’s Wellbeing Index into innovative transmedia design campaigns that communicate a shared understanding of the community’s strengths and needs as well as improve a collective sense of wellbeing for all citizens of Santa Monica.
The design process. Students began with immersive field research in Santa Monica, CA; with the goal of finding the human voice of the city and how that corresponds to Wellbeing data. After review of the research findings, two creative campaign concepts emerged. The teams worked to develop their concepts into full campaigns that could be easily implemented by the City.
The Wellbeing Index provides a baseline for understanding what contributes to wellbeing and how the city and community can work to improve it. By understanding more about what makes a community thrive, civic leaders and community stakeholders can work together on making meaningful changes in the community and creating effective future policy and programs.
The index collected survey info from over 2,000 Santa Monica residents about personal experiences and thoughts on housing, mobility and development among other topics. Researchers also scanned public commentary on social media outlets to determine attitudes and concerns about money, jobs, economic disparity and other relevant issues.
One of the two project outcomes, “@santamonicafamily” was created with the goal of branding Santa Monica as a city that brings people together and establishing a sense of belonging and community. This student team expanded the idea of the traditional family portrait to encompass the larger extended family of Santa Monica. The simple act of meeting one another before a camera lens became a gentle reminder that Santa Monicans have a familial bond and they can invest in one another and their community.
The Santa Monica Office of Civic Wellbeing has expressed interest in moving the concepts forward to full implementation. Students considered how to further expand the projects for display around Santa Monica in prominent locations to create a citywide art/photo gallery; and immersive environmental interventions with colorful therma-prints cleverly positioned onto existing infrastructure to convey data/statistics and start conversations.
Student teams were able to put into practice field research techniques learned during their course of study at ArtCenter. Additionally, students were in close contact with members of the Santa Monica Wellbeing Index who offered guidance, suggestions and affirmations with the teams’ concepts. As the students prototyped their campaigns, they were challenged to effectively connect people to data. Students had the opportunity to field test their prototypes in real-time with residents at Santa Monica events, farmer’s markets and by creating pop-up installations. Students took advantage of the immediate feedback loop from residents by carefully refining their projects.
Job Creation

The installation and upkeep of the campaign elements and design interventions around the city of Santa Monica could potentially provide jobs for several artists, designers, and contractors.
Employing wellbeing data results and field research, student teams designed, constructed and tested conceptual campaigns in real-time with real residents.
www.designmattersatartcenter.org/proj/wellbeing-santa-monica/

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