

Notes from the Roanoke Change Academy's Second Discussion of *Designing Creative Communities*—April 25, 2022



Thought Homework Discussion: Doug and Marissa asked the group a question based on the thought assignment posted at the first session: What local goings-on, traditions, establishments, procedures, people, places, etc. are you curious about?

- Multiple participants expressed a curiosity about local housing and architecture, such as the different kinds of housing throughout the city. Participants discussed Catawba stone and the Art Nouveau style, as well as the possibility of having shared blocks of community housing. A question was raised about why there aren't more unique AirBnBs in the area, and whether that was due to the market or tax laws. It was noted that what works in another city may not be a fit here
- Participants were also curious about changes to the transportation landscape, such as bringing the Mill Mountain funicular back and developing electric streetcars
- One participant said they wanted to know what is underground in Roanoke, especially downtown

Discussion Questions: Doug and Marissa asked the group a few questions inspired by the second portion of the book. Individual and group responses to these questions often shared similar themes.

- 1) Who in the community do you routinely talk to?
 - Our work/family/friend circles. A question was asked if we talk to people outside these spheres on social media, or if they mainly communicate with their work/family/friend circles online
 - People at places we frequent
 - Our neighbors. Are they similar to or different from us? For example, neighbors in an apartment building downtown may be a more diverse group than neighbors in the suburbs
 - People we volunteer to support
 - One participant noted that it's hard for without roots here to make community
- 2) Who don't you talk to? How could you start engaging with them?
 - The group agreed that we don't talk to people with whom our paths don't cross.
 - We discussed ways to engage with people we might not otherwise connect with. Strategies and comments included:
 - Talk to random people and ask them a question
 - Talk to people face-to-face
 - Use music as a connector
 - Outreach leads to a sense of belonging. Reaching people has to be an organized effort
 - Don't let polarization dictate who we do or don't talk to. Take a position of neutrality to learn others' points of view, and create an environment in which we can have conversations

- 3) If you want to change something in the community, how do you start? Who do you go to? Is this the best approach?
- Get people’s attention. Provide food and asks about their opinions and passions
 - Spread the word about what you know, and have more prominent physical signage for people who aren’t online or on social media.
 - Ask neighborhood and trusted community groups to spread the word, and have conversations at community events
 - Remember that it can take multiple interactions for a message to sink in, so repeat your messaging, and make it catchy or memorable if possible

Closing Discussion: Some additional topics were raised:

- Street art makes streets safer—art has a tangible impact on human life
- People who have ideas for projects should talk to artists. Together, they can make the vision come to fruition
- As part of Roanoke’s Year of the Artist effort, Art Matters grants of up to \$3,000 are available to artists for work that “advances wellness, justice, and inclusion in the community.” For more information, visit <https://roanokearts.org/2022/02/14/art-matters-a-call-for-works-that-advance-wellness-justice-inclusion/>

As a homework assignment, participants were asked to try to intentionally have a conversation with whom they might not otherwise speak.