



## Case Studies in Design

### Guidelines for Authors

#### INTRODUCTION

Case Studies in Design is a new effort to create opportunities for community and design leaders to think together about ways to catalyze transformational design, planning, and place-keeping from the ground up. The goals are to learn from ambitious projects designed in community, to share knowledge and experience through dialogue and a public library of case studies, and to train ourselves for new practices of creative, collective action. We hope to build conversation among thinkers and doers in community organizations, movements, public agencies, schools, and the architecture, landscape, planning, heritage and art fields.

PennPraxis will publish the case studies and create an online public library to disseminate them. We will organize a variety of forums from the classroom to gatherings with policymakers and funders to explore and propagate strategies that increase community conversation and influence in the built environment. In 2027, with 15 case studies published, we will organize a summit for community leaders, policymakers, students, practitioners, and thinkers to probe more deeply into methods and to shape lessons learned for key audiences. The aim of the summit is to create culture-shifting dialogue between disciplines, spheres of action, governments, funders and community leaders, practice and theory. We hope that authors will participate in the 2027 symposium (dates to be determined) and will provide additional resources to cover your travel expenses at that time.

#### PRIMARY EMPHASIS AND LENGTH

Case studies should be 6,000 to 10,000 words in length. Authors will create and / or curate 8 to 15 images that capture the process, particularly the forms and outcomes of engagement. Timelines and organization charts will be standard illustrative elements across all case studies (see below). Appendices with additional information are a welcome resource for readers.

The cases cover radically different subject matter—contested cultural landscapes, housing and community creation, climate adaptation and retreat, and the agency of art in brownfield reclamation in the first cohort. The case study series can encompass such diverse project types by keeping the primary emphasis of each case on:

1. the engagement process and its impact on decision-making and design,
2. succinct analysis and illustration of the physical design, plan, or other project outputs,
3. the path of the players and project through real-world challenges,
4. the reception of project outputs, built space and other outcomes, and
5. measures of success and key questions the case raises for discussion.

A good portion of the 6,000 to 10,000 words and the visuals should help readers think about philosophies, strategies, and tools of engagement and representation used to discover and negotiate conflict and challenges and to achieve exceptional outcomes. Weaknesses of engagement, superfluous engagement that doesn't afford participants agency, or failures of alignment are important to document and explore. This will leave less

space for aspects of the subject matter that might be very interesting to audiences within a given field. A compact analysis of the physical design or plan with a strong set of illustrations will help satisfy that audience, along with appendices. Appendices that provide background information or data that participants in the process were working with at the time will allow for deeper case discussion of decision making under uncertainty or where there is conflict.

In general, we are looking for:

- detailed, engaging storytelling,
- inclusion of the voices of key participants,
- images that capture the process, particularly the forms and outputs of engagement—*how to*—as well as the project itself
- analysis of decision making under uncertainty—real dilemmas and trade-offs,
- the influence of process on outcomes.

## STANDARD ELEMENTS

The case studies will include some standard elements that facilitate comparison across cases and increase the coherence of the case studies as a set:

- 300 to 600-word opening statement of the significance of the case study, including the key conflicts and challenges of engagement.
- Introduction to site, context and history of the project, including the process that defined and initiated the project and gathered its early players.
- Timeline of major events and components / phases of engagement in text or diagram. (A standard timeline format will be developed by Praxis to increase comparability, but authors may produce their own if they feel a particular approach to the timeline will better convey their observations.)
- Organization chart or network diagram of central and less central players in the process. (A standard diagram format will be developed by Praxis to increase comparability. Authors may provide information as a structured list that makes hierarchies clear.)
- Measures of success—strengths, weaknesses, challenges for engaged design and planning--and key questions the case raises for discussion. (For example, How can good process make government more comfortable with risk?)
- Illustrations, captions, and image sources. Authors are asked to request and confirm permissions for use in our publication by May 1.
- Pull quotes.

Otherwise, authors have latitude to develop and present the case in a way that captures its specificity. The appropriate length of the case study (within the 6,000 to 10,000-word range) will depend on the process and project you document and the degree to which illustrations can convey critical information.

## EDITING AND LAYOUT

Authors in cohort 2 will submit near-final drafts by February 15, 2026, and a rough draft by November 1, 2025. Each author will provide comments to one other case author in the cohort between February 15 and March 15. Each author will receive comments from one other author for consideration.

PennPraxis will suggest edits to your text and images, as the editor of the Case Studies in Design series. PennPraxis will lay out the case studies in a common format and prepare standard timelines and organization charts based on the information provided by authors. Our editorial and layout team will take authors' comments on the draft layout we prepare, and work with you to achieve something you are happy with. We aim to agree on the final text, illustrations and layout between April 15 and May 15, 2026.

Your point of contact for the submission and throughout the editing process will be Anushka Samant [aasamant@design.upenn.edu](mailto:aasamant@design.upenn.edu).

## STYLES

We will use Chicago Style for citations. Most citations will be endnotes to streamline the layout. Please let us know if there are notes that you think need to appear adjacent to the body text for readability.

Image captions should give enough description to support appreciation of the image by a broad audience. The format for captions should be: **Line of text about the image. (Source, date if any)**

All timelines should include the date of project initiation and the date of earliest engagement.

In this first round of case studies, we do not have guidelines on the degree of granularity we would you like to include in the organization charts. It could be helpful to have you code people and organizations as major players and supporting players. We will see if we can capture those differences in the representational approach.

High resolution, color images are preferred, but we recognize they may not always be available when sourced from community members or phone cameras during events. (There are no minimum specs.)