



THE BUILDING EQUITY STANDARD

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR OPERATIONALIZING
EQUITY IN THE DESIGN OF OUR BUILDINGS,
SPACES, AND COMMUNITIES

The Building Equity Standard (BEST) offers architecture practitioners and design teams a pathway for addressing equity in the **design** of the built environment. Goals and strategies were identified through qualitative research conducted of four real-life case studies designed through a community-engaged approach. BEST is currently in the piloting phase, with strategic plans to continue the refinement and development of content over the next several years. If you are interested in collaborating on future efforts related to BEST, please contact Victoria Lanteigne at vlanteigne@swinter.com.

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Attribution

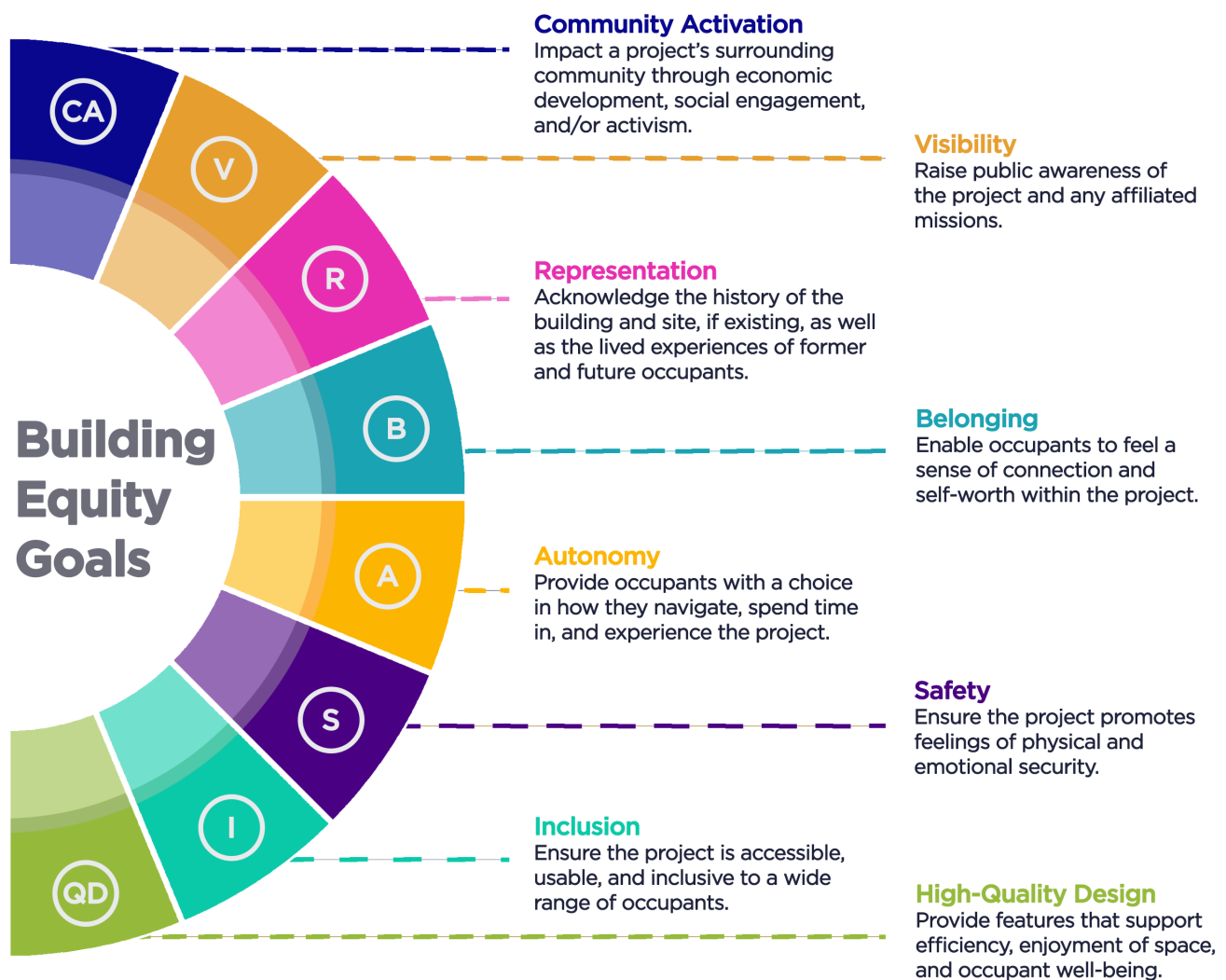
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PART I. BUILDING EQUITY GOALS

A framework of equity goals is presented here that represents eight goals for advancing equity in the design of the built environment. These goals should be considered during the design of all spaces, elements, and features of the project where possible.



PART 2. BUILDING EQUITY DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines are offered as optional pathways for achieving the eight Building Equity Goals. The guidelines are organized into three categories that align with typical architectural design considerations: Site Planning, Architecture, and Programming. Guidelines are intentionally left open-ended to be tailored toward specific communities and end-users of a particular project.

Category #1: Site Planning

Site Selection

Select a site with historical significance to the community based on events that occurred there and/or its location.

Reclaim an existing building or site that once represented disempowerment to instead support empowerment of marginalized groups.

Select a prominent site and location to raise the visibility of marginalized groups.

Select a site and building that will drive economic development in an underserved neighborhood.

Site Design

Ensure the site is connected to the community through easy-to-navigate and accessible public walkways.

Include a large focal piece on-site to raise awareness of the project and/or its mission.

Position the exterior site as a resource to the community, including associated programming.

Use designated public space to engage the surrounding community.

Category #2: Architecture

Historic Preservation

Preserve cultural artifacts/pieces that are relevant to the community.

Preserve parts of the existing building (if applicable) that have significance to the community and/or support the building's historical narrative.

Consider honoring the legacy of relevant historical figures through the naming of the project and/or other rooms or spaces within the building.

Entrances and Façade

Enlist local artists to create artwork at the entry to both engage visitors and reflect the community.

Ensure entry areas have ample natural lighting with open sightlines.

Consider material for the façade that reflects the community.

Extend exterior routes to entryways to connect the community.

Use vibrant colors for signage and/or engaging words to describe what is going on in the space.

Stairs and Elevation

*Factor accessibility into stairway design as much as possible while ensuring to:

- Include accessible/roll-up areas where possible.
- Create equally enjoyable ramped/elevator-served pathways.

Consider pedestals or raised areas at the exterior site to promote focal points for social gathering and to provide a platform for elevating voices.

Include grand stairways to promote social gathering.

- Include accessible/roll-up areas.

Include connector stairs across multiple building levels to create a “vertical community.”

- Use unifying colors, landings, etc., to support wayfinding throughout buildings.

Lighting and Windows

Use soft non-fluorescent lighting.

Feature natural daylighting whenever possible.

Include large front-facing windows to facilitate transparency into the building.

Position windows slanting outward to create areas for seated benches on the interior for occupants to engage with the outside.

Consider tint and other treatments to support shading and privacy options.

Spatial Volume

Explore the use of volume within spaces:

- High ceilings can create feelings of grandeur while lower ceilings can create feelings of safety and coziness.

Inclusion

**The guidelines offered below do not reflect comprehensive inclusive design strategies, but rather, only those that emerged from this study. Visit external inclusive design resources for more guidance.*

Consider accessibility beyond federal laws and codes.

Include design that addresses all body types and sizes.

Consider an intergenerational space by incorporating areas for rest.

Consider the usability of spaces and features across varying disabilities, including mobility, hearing, visual, cognitive, mental, and emotional disabilities.

Explore audio capabilities in art pieces and wayfinding.

Provide gender-neutral restrooms.

Consider language variations for services and wayfinding.

Category #3: Programming

Programmed Spaces

Ensure programming reflects the unique needs of the community in which the project is located.

Provide public access to areas of the building such as amenities, rooftops, exterior sites, etc.

Provide occupants with the option to experience difficult or emotional aspects of the project.

Interior Design

Include messages or words relevant to the project by embedding them into architectural elements.

Position points of check-in or reception desks off to the side.

Install flexible furnishings.

Explore thermal comfort options based on occupant needs.

Art Installations

Host rotating art exhibits:

- Allow community members to participate in planning/selecting exhibits.
- Reflect different groups within the community.
- Showcase local artists.
- Consider ways to communicate artwork non-visually.

Host permanent art exhibits:

- Represent important historical figures, events, etc., that are relevant to the community/project.
- Have a literal and direct representation of the community.
- Consider ways to communicate artwork non-visually.

Ensure direct representation of the community through images, artwork, etc.
