

IDEO PROCESS OVERVIEW - LAKELAND

“How Design Thinking will transform the LEDC and inspire innovation in Lakeland”

The Lakeland Economic Development Council along with its High Skill High Wage Investors partnered with Design Firm IDEO in early 2013 to bring a human-centered perspective to the ongoing thinking about the LEDC and Lakeland’s future.

The Lakeland team, which included community partners, was exposed to and immersed in the design thinking process, identified learnings, patterns and opportunity areas for Lakeland to explore and worked together to identify and prioritize a range of concepts from quick wins to longer term initiatives.

Community partners included The Lakeland Chamber of Commerce, City of Lakeland, Polk County, Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agencies, Lakeland Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Lakeland Partnership, Lakeland Vision, Polk Vision, Lakeland Business Leaders, Polk Works, The Ledger and The LEDC and its High Skill Investors.

IDEO’s scope of work included off site exercises, local interviews, whine and dines, living like a local and community workshops over a three week period. IDEO designers experienced what it felt like to live, work and play in Lakeland.

Prior to meeting with the LEDC and its Community Partners, through its on the street and immersion research techniques, IDEO identified key areas of discovery through “how might we...” questions.

How might we...

- Shift from stories about the history of Lakeland to stories about its people?
- Build a community, not a destination?
- Create a new invitation? “come to Lakeland and start something?”
- Nurture the talent we have? For those that want to leave, let them go explore, don’t hang on too tightly, stay in touch.
- Connect the old and new mindsets in Lakeland? The curious (what could be) with the starter (I am making it) to the protector (I want to protect and save what I’ve made).
- Create a long-term vision but learn how to prototype quickly?
- Shift from long consensus building timelines to short pilots with continuous feedback loops?
- Identify quality growth? How do we build consensus regarding its definition?
- Realize that a rising tide lifts all boats? How can we find mutual benefits and stop competing?

Through the workshop process with the LEDC and its Community Partners IDEO walked participants through two days of observing, storytelling, synthesis, brainstorming, creating prototypes and gathering user feedback.

Workshop participants were informed, inspired and engaged in ways most had never experienced in their own community. Participants rode city buses, took a neighborhood bike tours and conducted in-depth interviews with Lakeland snowbirds.

After each observation experience, participants spent time sharing stories with the group explaining who they talked to and what they heard and observed. Participants then synthesized what they learned in a process that took them from inspiration to ideas, from stories to solutions. While brainstorming, participants asked themselves “how might we...” questions.

- Make it easy for small business to start?
- Create an invitation to the community to come join us?
- Make being the new person in Lakeland something awesome?
- Clarify the rules of participation between the public and private sectors?
- Foster big business to help smaller, newer businesses?
- Support people who are experimenting, in a low risk way?

Participants were then asked to prototype these ideas, reminding us that failing often and early helps you succeed sooner. We were inspired by what could be, evolving into what should be, and then executing what will be. Prototypes included:

- Swan Tank – Entrepreneur gathering space and business plan competition
- NothingtodoinLakeland.com – A website where everything cool, unique and Lakeland is found.
- Connecting to Newbies - How might we train first responders in our community that connect with new Lakeland residents (realtors, title agents, bankers, tax collectors, etc)?

Participants refined their prototypes and expanded their concepts through user feedback. As the prototypes unfolded, we learned that a story needs to be repeated many times before people understand how it applies to them and many more times again before they change their behavior.

One on one interviews were conducted with participants following the workshop. Additional ideas and concepts discussed included “How might we?”

- Create a clearinghouse for entrepreneurs
- Create a linear park that connects our Lakes, Neighborhoods and Universities to Downtown making Lakeland more walkable and bikeable
- Create Downtown gathering places, residential projects, attract more locally owned restaurants and college students.
- Connect to the “under the radar” groups – Entrepreneurs, Snowbirds, etc.
- Create our own identity – From Hipster movement to I-4 signage to public art
- Identify the Curious, Starters & Protectors (LEDC & Community)

- Create a new definition for success in Lakeland in addition to financial:
 - o Is it authentic to Lakeland?
 - o Does it have integrity, passion and grit?
 - o Is it connected to the community?
 - o Is it on target with where we want to grow?

A major portion IDEO' s deliverable was about process and mindset. Mindset changes that resonated with our team included:

- Connecting the old and new mindsets
- Shifting from a long term view to quick action
- Promoting Lakeland as a "Lifestyle, not a destination."
- Creating a culture that accepts failure as a learning opportunity

A design project is not open-ended and ongoing and includes the following constraints:

- Desirability – what makes sense to people and for people?
- Feasibility – what is functionally possible within the foreseeable future?
- Viability – what is likely to become part of a sustainable business model?

LEDC and their Community Partners recently met to discuss which projects are desirable, feasible and viable for Lakeland, the list includes:

How might we identify Lakeland as a Lifestyle not a Destination?

How might we create a place for entrepreneurs to flourish, where experience meets startup?

How might we connect to the under the radar groups?

How might we create a place or inventory of Lakeland's freakin' cool assets?

How might we transition City (Hall's) mindset from Protector to Facilitator?

How might we identify Lakeland's success grid and run everything through it?

As we begin to explore these How Might We's, the LEDC and its Community Partners will be extending an invitation to others to join us...stay tuned...