

# FREE SAMPLE ARCHITECTURE

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A designer never spurs real change alone.

The design process becomes an icebreaker for uncomfortable conversations between old adversaries: the powerful gatekeepers and a highly plural public. Both are design's allies. But, they require different approaches.

Designers can become critical mediators.

Free Sample Architecture employs physical prototypes to test out potential solutions to a design challenge, in small low-risk components.

Individuals who encounter the humble free sample can experience it first hand. Documenting their positive or negative reactions provides anecdotal but earnest feedback about a particular design possibility. The designer must work in multiples, testing out a variety of solutions, to get a reasonable sense of what qualities are most effective.

The process of identifying what people need at a site has the potential to break through the limitations of observational research, transforming into a welcoming, transparent series of interactions.

In many cities, individuals or marginalized groups may not presently recognize that they have a right to help shape the public spaces around them.

How can designers systematically include the excluded?  
How else can we foster agency?

Human-scale prototypes are accessible to all demographics of people, provided they are occupying the hyperlocal space of the site. Even the best graphic architectural representations can be challenging to mentally translate into three-dimensional space prior to the start of construction. A more democratic approach to welcoming designs supersedes this barrier between the design and the intended user.