



Design Systems Collective



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Copilot Vision vs. Figma MCP: The Battle for the Future of Design Systems

One guesses from screenshots. The other knows your tokens. Here's why Figma just flipped the script.



Youssef Taghlabi

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Copilot Vision vs. Figma MCP:

The Battle for the Future of
Design Systems



Copilot
Vision

vs.



Figma
MCP

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It's a strange thing, writing your own retraction.

Just 48 hours ago, I shared how **GitHub Copilot Vision** blew me away in an article I wrote titled **The Figma UX-to-UI Handoff Dream Finally Came True — Just as Copilot Vision Made It Obsolete** — drag in a screenshot of a UI, prompt it to use your design system, and voilà: clean, structured React code using your components. No exports. No redlines. No Figma.

I said the quiet part out loud: **Figma solved the wrong problem.**

They perfected the UX-to-UI handoff, just as Copilot quietly killed the need for one.

It felt like déjà vu. Photoshop optimized for slices while the web went responsive. Now Figma had built *Figma Make* and *Figma Sites* — beautiful tools for a workflow that was quietly disappearing.

But then something happened.

Figma dropped a protocol. And everything changed again.

Meet MCP: Figma's Model Context Protocol

It's not a flashy feature. No whiz-bang demo. No magical UI generator.

Just a quiet sentence:

“We’re releasing the MCP server in beta to help AI agents access structured design context directly from your Figma files.”

This is Figma's best hope of becoming a platform for AI.

MCP is a bridge. It lets tools like Copilot, Claude, or custom LLM agents talk directly to your design system. Not screenshots. Not janky plugins. Not Slack threads.

Structured context. Programmatically accessible. Natively readable.

This Changes Everything (Again)

With MCP, your Figma file becomes more than a static artifact. It becomes **live data**.

Now, an AI agent can:

- Query your token system for spacing rules
- Read component structures and variants
- Understand color usage, typography, grid systems, and more

The AI doesn’t just *see* the design — it understands how it works.

That React component you wanted Copilot to generate?

Now it *really* knows which tokens to use, what the layout grid expects, how your system treats modals vs cards.

MCP vs. Copilot Vision: Why This Actually Matters

Copilot Vision is impressive. No question. I LOVE it!!

It can take a screenshot and *guess* your intent. And sometimes, the guess is good enough. But here's the thing:

It's still guessing.

It doesn't know your actual token values.

It can't distinguish between a Figma one-off and a canonical component.

It doesn't understand your system's intent — it reverse-engineers it.

Figma's MCP Server is the system's intent.

It doesn't guess. It tells the truth.

Here's the core difference:

- 🧠 **Copilot Vision:** Smart guesses based on images
- 🗝️ **Figma MCP:** Precise answers from live design data

One is clever.

The other is *correct*.

And when you're generating production UI that should reflect a living system of truth, **correct wins every time.**

Last Week, It Felt Like Figma Missed the Platform Shift

This week? It feels like they're quietly leading it...again

Here's what makes this so brilliant:

While others race to be “design-to-code,” Figma is becoming “**design as code.**”

Instead of trying to out-AI Copilot, they're empowering it.

And that's the move that might just save them.

Because in this new world, where AI agents are the new IDEs, **whoever holds the design context wins.**

The Workflow of the Future Is Already Here

Here's what I tried this week:

- Copilot (in VS Code) generating a new settings page
- Prompted it to use our design system
- Copilot queried the MCP server
- Result: React + Tailwind code, *perfectly aligned with our tokens and structure*

No screenshots. No hacks. No babysitting the output.

Just real-time, Figma-native, system-aware UI generation.

And suddenly, Figma didn't feel like a canvas anymore.
It felt like a **design system operating system**.

Figma's Second Chance

They still have work to do.

MCP is currently in beta and still has numerous security issues. The ecosystem's small. The docs are sparse. Most teams aren't using it yet.

But now, there is a path:

- AI agents write your UI.
- Figma feeds them the rules.
- Your design system becomes the *compiler*, not just the spec.

Figma doesn't need to be the generator.

It just needs to **guide the ones that are**.

And if it keeps building like this, it won't just survive the AI wave — it'll help shape what comes after it.

Final Thought: I Wasn't Wrong — But I Was Early

When I said Figma was dead, I meant it the way you mean it when your favorite band releases a bad album. You're frustrated because you know

they're capable of more.

This week, they reminded me why I cared in the first place.

Because even in an AI-native world, **intention still matters.**

And Figma — if it leans into this moment — might still be the best place to shape it...until Copilot releases another killer feature that tops it.

What do you think?

Are we entering a world where design systems aren't just referenced — but *read*? Is Figma about to become the Git for AI builders?

 Let's talk.

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Written by Youssef Taghlabi

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What are your thoughts?



Nehmat Gereige

Jun 5



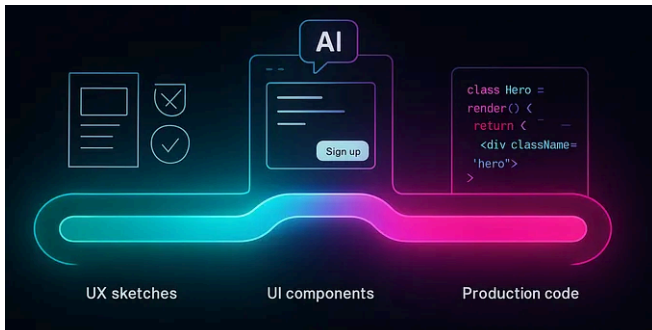
Absolutely brilliant and compelling perspective Youssef. Thank you for sharing soooo much precious knowledge and keeping us in the know. I knew Figma will rise to the challenge.




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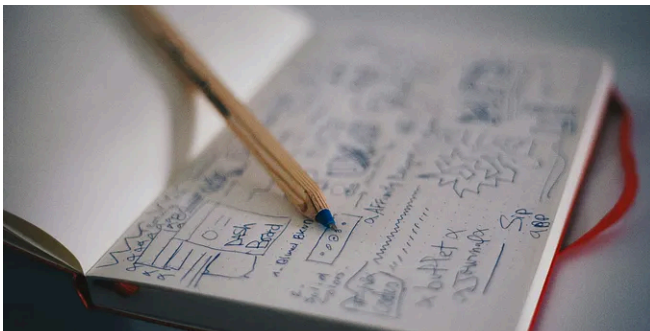


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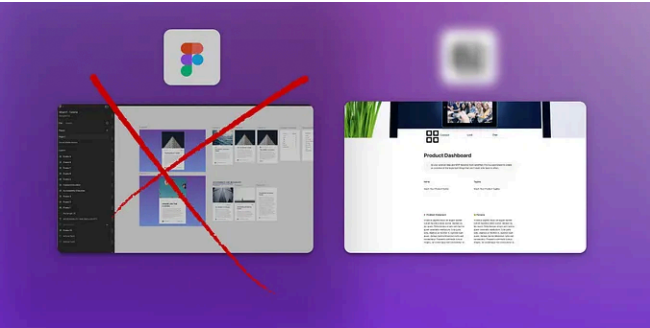
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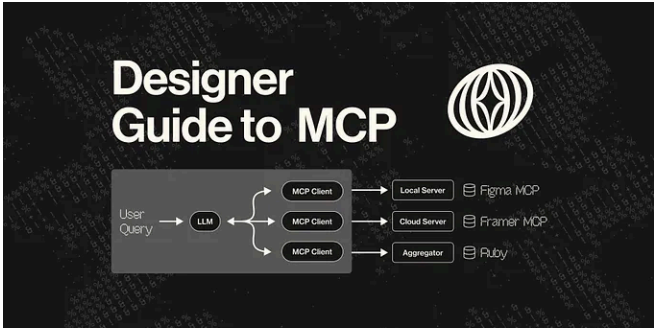


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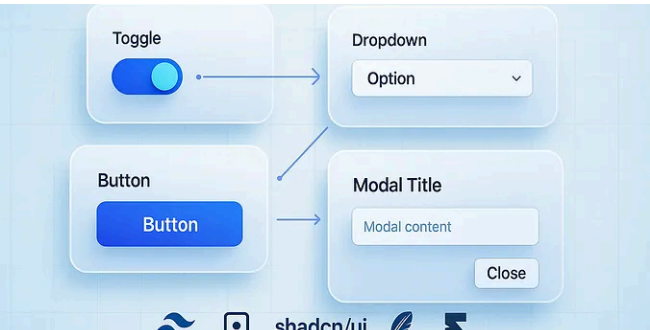


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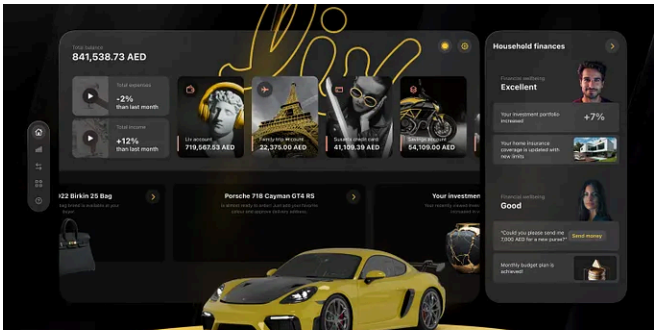
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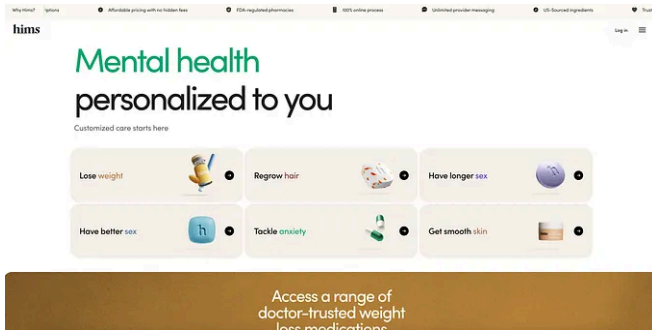
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