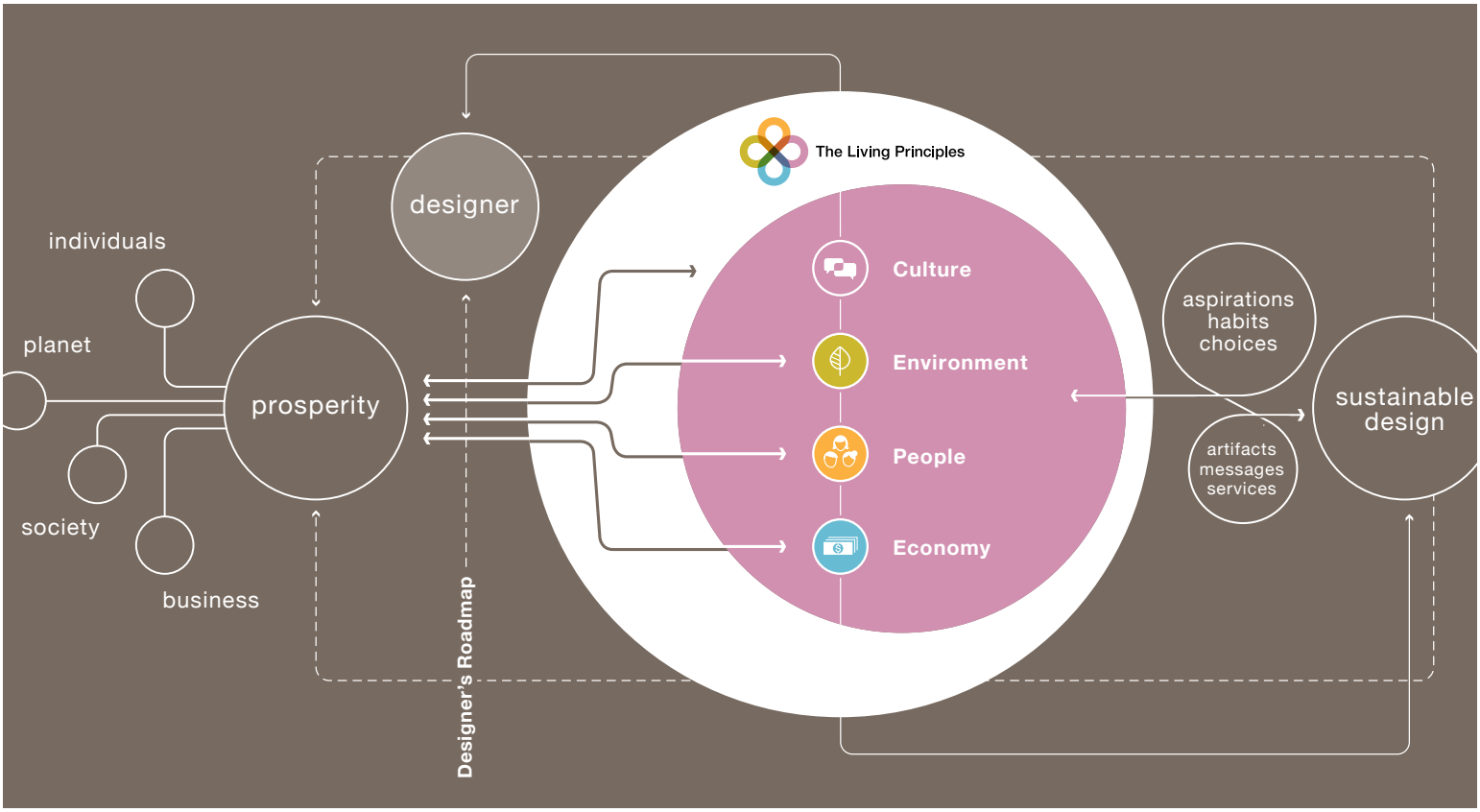
The Living Principles

The Living Principles for Design framework is a catalyst for driving positive cultural change. It distills the four streams of sustainability—environment, people, economy, and culture—into a roadmap that is understandable, integrated, and most importantly, actionable. Designers, business leaders, and educators can use The Living Principles to guide every decision, every day.

These principles are truly living: our success is dependent on the active involvement of the creative community to drive the conversation, the industry, and the world toward a brighter future.



Four Streams of Integrated Sustainability[1]

[1] Definitions adapted from Adam Werbach, *Strategy for Sustainability*

Environment

Actions and issues that affect natural systems, including climate change, preservation, carbon footprint and restoration of natural resources.

People

Actions and issues that affect all aspects of society, including poverty, violence, injustice, education, healthcare, safe housing, labor and human rights.

Economy

Actions and issues that affect how people and organizations meet their basic needs, evolve and define economic success and growth.

Culture

Actions and issues that affect how communities manifest identity, preserve and cultivate traditions, and develop belief systems and commonly accepted values.

The Living Principles are endorsed by many global organizations, including Cumulus, Design Ignites Change, Design Management Institute (DMI), GDC Ontario, GreenBlue, Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA), o2 Global Network, Organic Exchange, The Society of Graphic Designers of Canada, and Winterhouse Institute.

The Living Principles Roadmap

Environment

Design can invent new systems, products, and services that use less and deliver more. It can translate complex concepts into the relevant messages that help people adopt behavioral change.

BEHAVIORS

How can you use this project to promote actions that protect and restore the environment?

CREATION

As you consider your project from creation to end user, what materials are you using, and what potential intended or unintended ecological consequences can you foresee, including air quality and water?

How can overall energy use be minimized–and renewable energy use maximized–in all stages of manufacturing, transportation, and use?

DURABILITY

What is the expected life span of the artifact? Can it be extended? What other use could this artifact have? Can the artifact be easily repaired and reused? Can it be upgraded?

DISASSEMBLY

How easy is it to disassemble your product once discarded? Are the materials clearly labeled, the parts easy to take apart? Are they made of only one material or several?

SUPPLY CHAIN

Can your product be wholly or partially constructed in the location where it will be used? To what extent do your suppliers work sustainably and use clean technologies?

WASTE

How can waste be eliminated? When your product's life span is complete, how can you close the loop, i.e. facilitate the use of materials in continuous cycles?

People

Design can visualize acute needs, raise awareness, prompt public response, and affect policy. It can promote messages of inclusion, equality and empathy, helping to establish harmonious and healthy conditions in which all members of society can flourish.

IMPACTS

How does the project affect various individuals and communities throughout its life, from makers to users and those involved in its disposal?

CONFLICTS

Is your product (or any of its components) created by or affiliated with organizations that support issues your audience or client may find objectionable?

DESIRABILITY

Is this product actually desired by your customers or stakeholders?

NEED / USE

What societal needs does this artifact, message, service or experience fulfill? Is it useful?

LONG VIEW

How can this project enhance the lives of its makers and users?

Economy

Design thinking's approach to investigation, analysis, and visualization can create value and opportunities for companies and people across all streams of sustainability.

SYSTEMIC VIEW

What are the financial requirements of this project? Who gains economic value from purchasing or using this product or service? Can it provide value above and beyond its intended use?

METRICS

How is the inherent value of the project measured? Is value assessed only in terms of financial profit?

BENEFITS

What are the short- and long-term economic benefits of incorporating sustainable solutions?

TRANSPARENCY & TRUTH

Can you communicate transparently about every aspect of the project? Are you promoting your work, your organization, or your client beyond the actual value that it provides?

WASTE=FOOD

Can your raw materials come from someone else's waste? Can your waste become someone else's raw material?

FROM PRODUCT TO SERVICE

Is there an opportunity to create a rental, leasing, or service model for this product?

Culture

Design can cross cultural barriers to promote universal understanding. It can deliver a compelling view of sustainability that ensures its assimilation by a broad array of people. And at its best, it can shift consumption and lifestyle aspirations, literally changing the definition of prosperity.

VISIONS

In what ways can this project compel people to make more sustainable lifestyle choices?

MEANINGS & REACTIONS

What meanings do your project communicate, and how are your customers and stakeholders acting upon them? What emotional reactions could they have? Is there any way they could react negatively?

A SYSTEMIC VIEW

What attitudes and values does your project promote, both in its intention and its execution? How does this project take into consideration the unique needs of various cultures?

DIVERSITY

How can this project promote cultural diversity?

Designer's Roadmap