Mosaic Ecosystem Design (Working Draft)

Mosaic is a proposal for a different kind of social media—one built around human well-being, democratic health, and long-term public value instead of maximizing engagement.

This is a working draft. It's incomplete on purpose. We're publishing it to invite criticism, ideas, and collaboration.

Status: Working draft
Scope: Ecosystem architecture, governance, and interoperability

This document lays out a possible direction for Mosaic. It explores how a human-centered, interoperable social media ecosystem could work, not a commitment to build any specific product or platform.

Overview

What Mosaic actually is (and isn't)

Mosaic isn't a single platform, app, or company.

It's an ecosystem design—a shared framework that lets many different social spaces and services work together, evolve, and stay connected without anyone owning or controlling the whole thing.

The goal isn't to replace every existing social platform. It's to create a real, scalable alternative to the dominant model—one where the technology, incentives, and governance actually serve the public good.

Design principles

Human-centered by design
People and communities should be able to optimize for their own well-being, agency, and meaningful connection. Rather than baking in one definition of "healthy" behavior, Mosaic provides the structural conditions—choice, transparency, portability—that let people curate experiences aligned with their values.

Interoperability as a requirement, not a feature
Real competition between service providers only works with interoperability. Shared standards and portability prevent vendor lock-in, enable genuine choice, and keep any single actor from capturing or controlling the network.

Users control their identity and data
You should own your identity and personal data. You choose your providers, move between services, and revoke access without losing your social connections.

Pluralism over uniformity
Different communities need different norms, tools, and governance. The ecosystem supports this diversity while maintaining the ability to interoperate.

Governance is infrastructure

Lasting public benefit requires governance mechanisms built into the foundation, not bolted on as an afterthought.

Architecture: How Mosaic Works

The four layers

Mosaic has four interconnected layers:

1. **People**

2. **Personal data**

3. **Spaces**

4. **The River**

These layers enable social interaction, discovery, and collaboration across independent systems without central control.

People (identity & agency)

You participate in Mosaic with a portable, user-controlled digital identity instead of platform-bound accounts.

Your identity:

- Works independently of any single service

- Lets you authenticate across multiple spaces

- Supports privacy-preserving and selective disclosure

Identity is treated as public infrastructure, not platform property.

Personal data (storage & control)

Your personal data lives in places you control or trust, not captured and monetized by platforms.

The key requirement: portability and consent. You can move, revoke, or grant access to your data without losing your social graph.

Spaces (communities & services)

Spaces are interoperable social environments built on shared standards.

Examples:

- Interest or affinity-based community groups

- Creator and publisher spaces

- Civic hubs for digital democracy

- Local community groups

Each space:

- Defines its own norms and governance

- Chooses its own business model

- Stays interoperable with the wider ecosystem

No single space owns the network.

The River (decentralized social feed)

The River is a decentralized activity stream that pulls together updates from spaces you follow.

Unlike centralized feeds:

- There's no single algorithmic authority

- Aggregation happens across independent systems

- You control what flows into your River

- You can choose between different algorithms or ranking systems

This enables discovery and connection without a central platform controlling attention.

Governance & Stewardship

Technical design alone can't make a social media ecosystem serve the public good.

Much of the need for innovation is around governance: how shared infrastructure gets stewarded, how incentives align, and how long-term public value is protected from short-term extraction or capture.

Mosaic will need explicit governance mechanisms, potentially including:

- Nonprofit, cooperative, or social-enterprise stewardship models

- Transparent and accountable standards development

- Certification or compliance mechanisms for ecosystem participants

- Representation across users, communities, service providers, and public-interest stakeholders

The exact institutional form is deliberately left open. What matters is that the ecosystem works well and the incentives shaping it align with the public good rather than extraction or capture.

Interoperability & Standards

Interoperability isn't aspirational—it's the minimum requirement for Mosaic to work.

To compete with large, vertically integrated platforms while staying open and decentralized, Mosaic needs connective tissue that lets independent services and spaces work together reliably.

This connective tissue includes:

- Clearly defined interoperability surfaces between components
- Shared protocols for identity, activity, and data exchange
- Portable credentials and relationships across services
- Predictable behavior across implementations

Standards alone don't guarantee real-world interoperability. Mosaic also needs:

- Reference implementations
- Conformance profiles
- Automated test suites and compliance testing

These ensure independently developed services can actually interoperate, not just theoretically, while preserving competition, choice, and decentralization.

Economic Considerations

Mosaic is intentionally agnostic about business models. The ecosystem doesn't dictate how individual services, spaces, or providers make money.

Instead, Mosaic enables open and competitive markets for social media services. Because identity, relationships, and data are portable, individuals and creators can move between providers and business models without losing their social graph or audience.

This portability is a core economic feature. It lowers switching costs, prevents lock-in, and lets multiple business models coexist and compete:

- Advertising-supported services (providing low-friction entry)
- Subscription-based services
- Creator-supported and patronage models

- Cooperative or membership-based structures

- Public-interest and grant-supported services

Advertising is one option among many, not a structural requirement. Individuals and creators remain free to move between services and business models, including opting out of advertising entirely.

By supporting a marketplace of interoperable services instead of a single dominant platform, the ecosystem can attract the capital and infrastructure needed to operate reliably at scale, while avoiding the extractive dynamics of advertising-driven monopolies.

The exact mix of business models will evolve as the ecosystem matures.

Future Design Areas

This draft focuses on foundational architecture and governance. Additional areas to develop as the ecosystem matures:

- Misinformation and disinformation mitigation

- Trust, reputation, and credibility signals

- Safety, moderation, and legal considerations

- Data sharing and consent models

- Relationships to emerging technologies like AI and immersive environments

These topics are intentionally deferred until core architectural decisions are clearer.