









INFORM. INVOLVE. EMPOWER: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY GUIDE

BROCKTON
CITY OF CHAMPIONS

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LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

As your Mayor, it both my honor and my responsibility to ensure that our city is always bettering our community to be the vibrant, thriving, and inclusive place that we all love about Brockton. We are the city of champions and want to grow together, raising up voices and ideas from our community. A key component of achieving a shared vibrant, thriving, and inclusive future is fostering strong partnerships between local government, residents, and businesses through a clear, transparent, and comprehensive engagement.

The City of Brockton is proud to introduce this INFORM, INVOLVE, EMPOWER Public Engagement Policy Guide. This guide is intended to be a resource for our staff to provide more ideas and intentionality when engaging with our public. It further provides more input on enhancing communication, increasing collaboration, and strengthening connections between the city and community. This guide was developed with input from a diverse group of individuals within the community to ensure that community voices were included in the development.

I am proud to see the emphasis on the community engagement goals of informing, involving, and empowering our community when we go to them for projects and input. This guide serves as a resource for our city staff to identify engagement strategies and tools that better align with community needs. We are committed to strengthening engagement and collaboration across all city departments.

I want to extend a thank you to all that supported this effort, provided input, and who will continue to engage and help us grow through this commitment to engagement. I look forward to seeing the positive impact that this INFORM, INVOLVE, EMPOWER Public Engagement Policy Guide will have on our community. Let us move forward as the city of champions through open dialogue, shared responsibility, and our shared collective vision for Brockton's future.

Sincerely,

Mayor Robert F. Sullivan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Thriving Communities Program (TCP) is designed to provide technical assistance, planning, and capacity-building support to communities, particularly those that are disadvantaged, to help them develop and implement transformative infrastructure projects. The program aims to enhance mobility, reduce pollution, and expand affordable transportation options, thereby connecting communities to essential opportunities and resources.

Brockton successfully secured technical assistance for the 2023-2025 Grant Period and identified a need for a more consistent and transparent public engagement process. The city aimed to ensure that residents, business owners, students, and workers have a clear and equitable way to participate in decision-making related to infrastructure, planning, and development projects.

DEVELOPED WITH INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

To center community voices in the creation of the policy guide, the City leveraged TCP to create a paid Community Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG was a group of representatives from community-based organizations who've were invited to co-create the INFORM INVOLVE EMPOWER Public Engagement Policy Guide (PEPG) with the City and Capacity Building team by sharing their experiences with engagement, their barriers to participation, and how they want the city to improve.

They shared ideas on the pillars for engagement, what types of engagement would be helpful for the diverse community of Brockton, and ideas on how the greater Brockton community could engage with this guide.



PILLARS OF MEANINGFUL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Effective public engagement in Brockton is essential for building trust, empowering residents, and achieving successful outcomes. Understanding the city's diverse community and fostering long-term relationships is crucial. Engagement should prioritize listening to residents, using their preferred communication methods, and ensuring they see their input valued.

A proactive, early, and consistent approach is key. Since Brockton's neighborhoods vary, a one-size-fits-all strategy won't work. Instead, multiple outreach methods—such as family-friendly events, social media, and in-person engagement—can help bridge the digital divide. Video content can also improve accessibility for those who prefer watching or listening over reading.

A feedback loop should track how community input influences city projects, and public education efforts should keep residents informed. Establishing a dedicated group of community leaders and organizations ensures consistent representation, while translation services help reach Brockton's multicultural population.

By expanding outreach efforts and "meeting people where they are," Brockton can strengthen trust, enhance decision-making, and create an inclusive community. Transparent communication and engagement will make city actions more legitimate and reflective of public needs. The city's approach is guided by eight engagement pillars, with three ranked most important: early and consistent involvement, inclusivity, and measurable success in public engagement.



CONDUCT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EARLY AND CONSISTENTLY



BE INCLUSIVE WITH PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



MEASURE AND QUANTIFY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUCCESSES



CLEARLY DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



KEEP PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPEN AND TRANSPARENT



MAKE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEMORABLE AND FUN



REMAIN RESPECTFUL DURING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



BUILD CAPACITY FO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

CITY STAFF

This guide was designed to support City of Brockton staff across all departments with meaningfully engaging the public to advance infrastructure, policy, and community projects. The document is oriented to walk city staff through the process of this documents creation and share best practices for setting up an engagement process that will not only meet project requirements, but also empower the community to be involved in shaping their city.

As the document title suggests, there are three key ways to engage the public meaningfully: inform, involve, and empower. The guide outlines what it means to inform, involve, and empower the public through community engagement to advance city priorities and projects. Spreads outline what it means to inform, involve, and empower the public through engagement and provides examples within other communities where cities conducted meaningful engagement. The guide highlights minimum actions that city staff should take when they embark on a project that would benefit from public feedback or on a project that requires engagement.

APPENDIX A compiles engagement tools city staff can reference as they build out an engagement plan for their projects. These strategies are aligned to project stages and the purpose of the engagement to best support more meaningful public engagement.

GENERAL PUBLIC

While this guide is a tool for city staff to more meaningfully engage the public, it should also be an informative and empowering tool for the public to understand how the city plans to engage you and dive into a collection of strategies that can be advocated for or utilized in your own communities to collect and share community input.

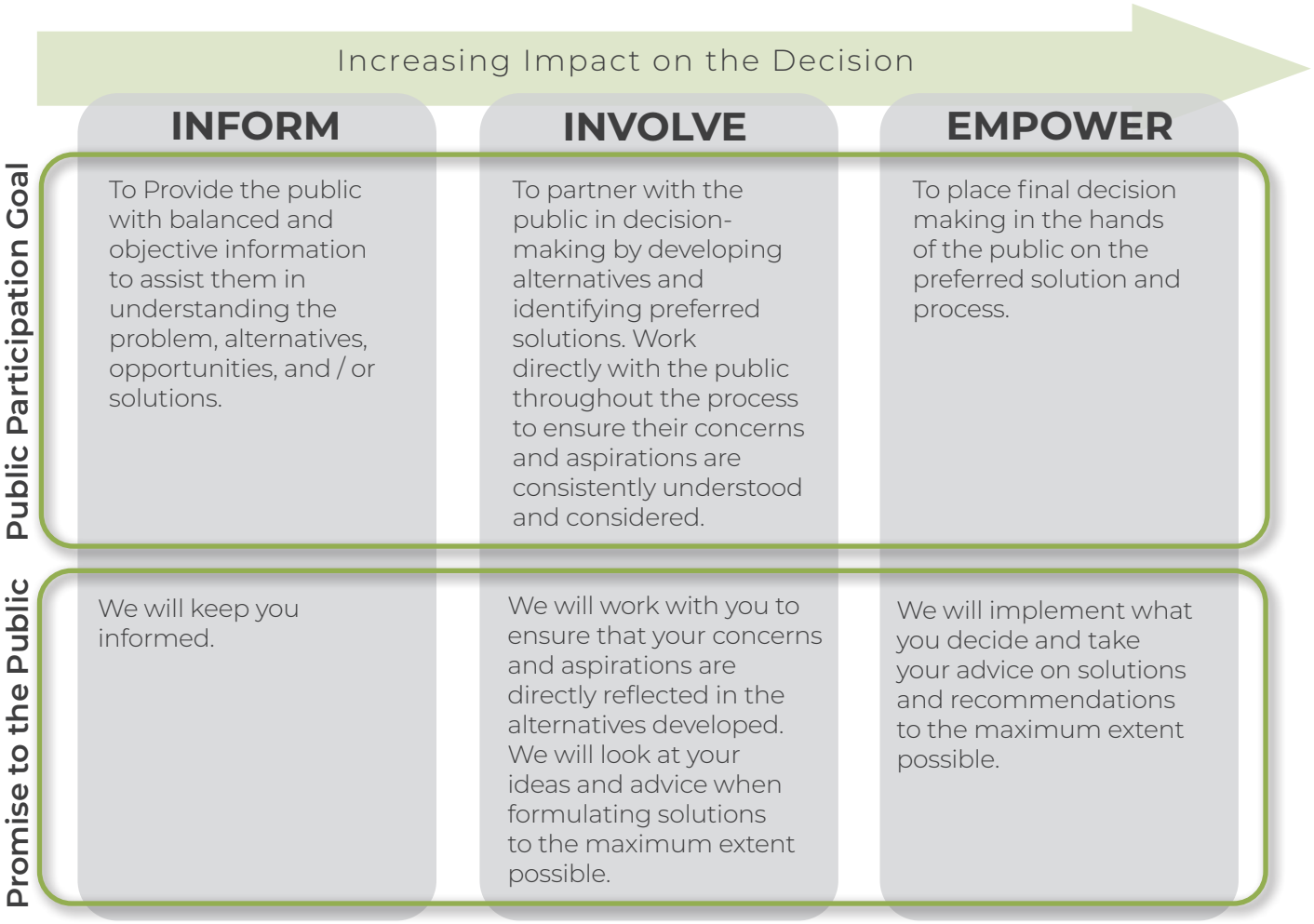
The guide can serve as a resource for the Brockton community to ask for specific types of engagement and to better prepare the public to “lean in” when the city starts a new infrastructure project, begins work on creating a new policy, or is working to update existing infrastructure or policies. It is also helpful for members of the public to understand how city staff are instructed to engage the public, and where, when, and how public input is needed to advance key initiatives.

Having access to the city’s engagement guide can empower the public to be proactive and involved in city projects moving forward. Equipped with an understanding of the city’s engagemnt process and what types of engagement the city can offer, the community can come to these events better informed about the way their feedback can be incorporated, or the types of engagement opportunities they would like to see be created for themselves and their neighbors to more directly shape their community.

At its worst, the guide can inform the public on how the city should approach community engagement. At its best, the guide can empower community members to proactively engage the city.

ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM FOR BROCKTON

Brockton's engagement strategy prioritizes three levels of impact—INFORM, INVOLVE, and EMPOWER—to ensure intentional and meaningful public participation. These levels align with the city's goals and community needs, guiding strategies and techniques for effective engagement. Tools such as public meetings, surveys, and workshops are chosen based on the desired level of involvement, ensuring transparency and trust. The approach follows the IAP2 framework, as outlined in the USDOT's Promising Practices, connecting participation goals to decision-making impacts. Clear communication of engagement purposes and realistic expectations helps manage community trust. This PEPG supports raising local voices and refining strategies over time. By implementing thoughtful, structured public engagement, Brockton can strengthen relationships, enhance decision-making, and create impactful projects that genuinely reflect residents' needs and aspirations.



Credit: IAP2 Spectrum via USDOT; adapted for City of Brockton

PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Here is the list of engagement and participation strategies and tools included in this PEPG.

1. *Brainstorming Workshops*
2. *Building Block Exercises*
3. *Community Advisory Committees*
4. *Community Mural Paintings*
5. *Community Wordclouds*
6. *Culturally-Specific Engagement*
7. *Design Charettes*
8. *Drop-in Locations*
9. *Email Notifications*
10. *Fairs and Pop-up Tables / Events*
11. *Focus Group Sessions*
12. *Information Hotlines*
13. *Interactive Displays / Kiosks*
14. *Kids / Youth Sketching Their Ideas*
15. *Mailers / Fliers*
16. *News Stories / Interviews*
17. *Photo and Video Contests*
18. *Podcasting*
19. *Presentations (reflecting previous input)*
20. *Project Briefings*
21. *Project Documentation made Public*
22. *Project Website / Updates*
23. *Public Presentations*
24. *Public Surveys*
25. *Public Workshops*
26. *Sharing out Public Survey Input*
27. *Social Media (Hashtags)*
28. *Social Media Site*
29. *Stakeholder Interviews*
30. *Steering committees (with decision making authority)*
31. *Storyteling Sessions*
32. *SWOT Activities*
33. *Text Campaign*
34. *Town Halls*
35. *Training / Educational Activities*
36. *Up-front Information (ahead of activities)*
37. *Virtual Reality Tools / Applications*
38. *Visioning Sessions*
39. *Yard Signs*

1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

PURPOSE & THRIVING COMMUNITIES

The Brockton INFORM INVOLVE EMPOWER Public Engagement Policy Guide (PEPG) was developed with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Thriving Communities Program (TCP) for Fiscal Year 2022. TCP funds organizations ("Capacity Builders") to assist disadvantaged communities in advancing transportation projects that support economic development, health, environment, mobility, and access goals. Brockton secured technical assistance for the 2023-2025 Grant Period.

The City recognized a need for more consistent approaches to public engagement in Brockton, where the public (residents, business owners, students, workers, etc.) have consistent and transparent mechanisms for their voice to be heard in infrastructure, planning, and development projects across Brockton. Thus, they dedicated their technical assistance request to the creation of a citywide public engagement policy that standardizes public engagement across city agencies for more consistent and equitable engagement with Brockton community members.

The INFORM INVOLVE EMPOWER PEPG will be a collection of tools and strategies the City will use for public engagement activities to deliver more community-driven infrastructure and planning decisions. Think of it as a road map that leads to better, more effective public engagement. The INFORM INVOLVE EMPOWER PEPG will apply to the city projects.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

This INFORM INVOLVE EMPOWER Public Engagement Policy Guide empowers Brockton to establish a comprehensive approach to community involvement, ensuring that residents have a meaningful voice in shaping their city. By fostering coordination across departments, the guide promotes inclusivity, amplifies underrepresented voices, and strengthens trust between the city and its residents. It serves as a vital tool for enhancing the city's capacity to engage community members effectively, fostering collaboration, and driving community-driven progress. Through this guide, Brockton is equipped to build a more connected, responsive, and engaged community.

VISION STATEMENT

The INFORM INVOLVE EMPOWER Public Engagement Policy Guide (PEPG) is all about bringing people into the conversation and making sure every voice counts. It's designed to create meaningful and inclusive ways for community members to shape the future of their city. With this guide, we're making public engagement a shared experience—one that reflects the diversity of our residents and ensures that everyone has a seat at the table. By providing a clear and consistent approach, the PEPG will help city departments work hand-in-hand with the community, fostering a culture of collaboration, trust, and lasting impact

BROCKTON'S ORGANIZATION

The City of Brockton is organized by departments. The city has 35 departments across a variety of areas, ranging from Veterans Services and Parks and Recreation to Animal Control and Schools. The guide can be used by any city department when it needs public input, though it is specifically focused on infrastructure projects.

It is particularly useful to departments that play a role in shaping the physical and social fabric of the city, and where public engagement is critical to securing funding for projects and to align services to resident's needs. Engagement may look different across city deparments.

Figure 1 highlights city departments that work on projects that maintain or create new public infrastructure such as roadways, bike lanes and sidewalks, parks, and new housing or development. The projects these departments manage and deliver often stand to benefit the most from public input; when these departments can provide better engagement opportunities, the more useful input they'll receive to help generate more effective investments for Brockton.

As projects are kicked off and running, it is important for city staff to share updates on projects status and provide opportunities for public feedback. Working with the Mayor's Office's PR and Communications Associate, city staff should prepare FAQs and fact sheets that can easily communicate what the project is, how long it will last, and when and where community members can learn more or actively engage in the project.

FIGURE 1-1: City Departments that manage physical infrastructure.



The departments listed highlight engagement opportunities for the City on public projects and when input is needed.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide should be used by city staff when embarking on public projects that shape the physical and social fabric of Brockton, where the public must have an opportunity to provide feedback, guidance, and input into how these projects are conceived, designed, and implemented. The public can use this guide to understand how engagement should be conducted and advocate for different strategies and opportunities to make their voices heard.

The following chapters provide further detail and instructions on how to meaningfully engage the public.

- The Community Advisory Group (CAG) chapter documents the contributions they made to the guide, summarizing each CAG meeting and major takeaways from their feedback.
- The Pillars of Meaningful Engagement chapter outlines the eight pillars of meaningful public engagement that USDOT documented in their Meaningful Public Involvement Guide, and highlights the pillars that were most important to CAG members.
- The Participation Strategies and Tools chapter organizes tools by three categories of engagement while providing minimum actions to successfully inform, involve, and empower residents.
- The Appendix includes participation strategies and tools for city staff to reference and choose as they build out their public engagement strategies.

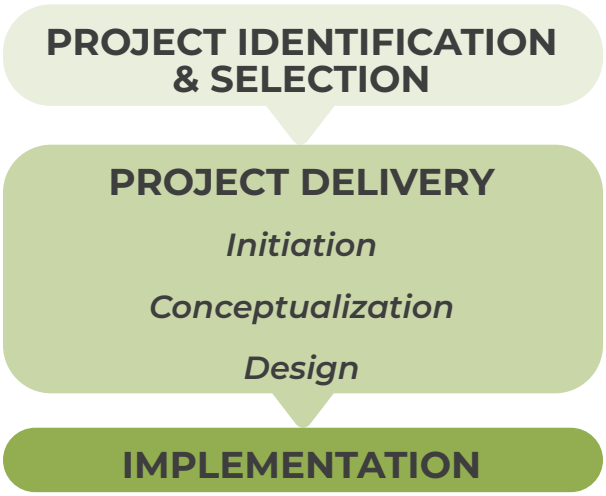
PROJECT PHASES WHERE ENGAGEMENT OCCURS

As City staff identify and deliver infrastructure projects or develop new policies, there will be key points at which public input is needed to not only comply with specific funding requirements, but to advance the initiative to the next stage successfully. The following figure presents three key phases of City Projects:

- **Project Identification & Selection** - the phase where a project is picked to move forward.
- **Project Delivery** ***(Initiation, Conceptualization, Design)*** - the phase where ideas are developed and tested.
- **Implementation** - the phase where projects are constructed or policies are adopted.

The strategies compiled in this document are matched to the various project phases to assist city staff with picking the appropriate tools for the appropriate project phase.

FIGURE 1-1: Project Phases



2 COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

OVERVIEW

To develop this Guide, the City created a Community Advisory Group (CAG) made up of representatives from community based organizations across the city to share their experiences, ideas, and suggestions for how the City should engage the public. This chapter delves into the process that went behind developing the CAG, summarizing the meetings held with the group, the topics discussed, and key takeaways and feedback they provided. This chapter serves to memorialize their participation and feedback directly into the Engagement Policy Guide; highlighting community needs, opportunities, and challenges that were identified along the way. The chapter ends with a section dedicated to a brief description of key takeaways from across the four meetings, and how those takeaways were codified in this Guide.

WHAT IS THE CAG?

The Community Advisory Group, or CAG, is a coalition of community representatives brought together to help co-create the Engagement Policy Guide that represents the vision and needs of Brockton residents.

The City and its technical assistance team developed a list of organizations to whom they'd reach out and ask to join. Organizations that opted to participate were compensated for their attendance across four 2-hour workshops between June 2024 and January 2025. CAG member organizations were asked to sign a commitment letter to receive the stipend and ensure their participation in co-creating the guide. The CAG was engaged both in person at Brockton City Hall and virtually, with lunch provided for in-person meetings. Report outs were developed and shared after each meeting for transparency.



CAG MEMBERS

The Planning Department and Capacity Building team held a walking tour around the City and held a community listening session at City Hall with local community organizations. Many of the organizations expressed interest in remaining engaged or provided the information for other organizations they believed should be involved. It is from this event and list that the CAG members were identified and contacted to participate. The following organizations committed to the CAG and contributed to this guide's development. A list of CAG members by organization is documented to the right.

African American Association of Brockton

A Brockton-based association dedicated to spreading knowledge about African American culture to the residents of the Greater Brockton Area.

Brockton Interfaith Community

An organization dedicated to justice, unity and bringing together diverse faiths and ethnicities in the greater Brockton area. They tackle pressing societal issues through collaborative, faith-inspired community organizing.

Brockton NAACP

Established in 1954, the Brockton Chapter of the NAACP has a storied history, supporting fair housing, civil rights, student needs, and legal advice and assistance. Through a volunteer committee structure, the chapter serves residents of all ages in being civically engaged, educated, and resourced.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

African American Association of Brockton
Jamie Hodges

Brockton Interfaith Community
Iolando Spinola
Michaela Lauture
Djanine Ineine
Gamaliel Lauture

Brockton NAACP
Phyllis Ellis

Black Owned Brockton
Dwight Buckland

Boys & Girls Club of Metro South
Monica Lombardo
Derek Heim

Campello Business Association
Karla Rogers

Dare 2 B Great
George Brickhouse
Eric Thomas Ronsley

DW Field Park Association
Jamal Brathwaite
Patrick Quinn

Homeless Forgotten Heroes
Cynthia Hodges

Neighborworks Housing Solutions & Village NBHD Association
Cindy Pendergast

Old Colony Planning Council
Paul Umano

Black Owned Brockton

An advocacy organisation and social impact venture meant to curate a cohesive, collaborative space where businesses and social connections are made and sustained.

Boys & Girls Club of Metro South

A youth development organization in Southeastern Massachusetts, serving more than 2,500 youth annually from infancy to adulthood, the Brockton Clubhouse has been serving the city since 1990 with after-school, weekend, and summer camp programs, providing a space for kids to be kids safely.

Campello Business Association

The Campello Business Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to help businesses grow and prosper in the Campello area of Brockton MA. As one of the oldest business organization in Brockton, we have a united voice and are recognized by the city as the only organization representing the interests of businesses in the Campello and South Side areas of Brockton.

Dare 2 B Great

Educational, emotional, and athletic advancement for community wellness and involvement.

D.W. Field Park Association

To protect, preserve and support D.W. Field Park through volunteerism while promoting a general interest in the Park and its historical and environmental significance through education and social programs.

Homeless Forgotten Heroes

Homeless Forgotten Heroes is dedicated to restoring, dignity, stability, and hope to homeless Veterans by providing essential resources, support, advocacy and delivering home cooked meals. We strive to ensure no hero is left behind.

NeighborWorks Housing Solutions

NeighborWorks® Housing Solutions (NHS) believes stable, affordable housing is a foundation for community well-being and economic vitality. We help stabilize communities by stabilizing residents through counseling, homebuyer education and housing resources. NHS develops and manages a diverse portfolio of housing, including single-family homes, multi-family buildings, and SRO units. The organization also offers specialized programs for families affected by foreclosure, domestic violence, homelessness prevention, and shelter-to-housing transitions.

Old Colony Planning Council

OCPC was established in part to address local challenges that cross city and town boundaries, like air and water pollution, transportation deficiencies, and economic distress. Overcoming challenges like these requires cooperative action and OCPC exists to help facilitate that cooperation and coordination.

MEETING - 1

Recap

Hosted: July 08th, 2024

The first meeting kicked-off the CAG and introduced the Thriving Communities Program (TCP). The meeting began with introductions of all the CAG members that attended, followed by an introduction to the Thriving Communities Program, its objectives, and goals. Discussions focused on the status quo, future goals, and barriers CAG members and their constituents experience or lack of experience with public engagement sessions led by the City.

After reviewing the study area, the team went over the scope of the Engagement Policy Guide, which includes evaluating existing engagement policies, gathering community and business feedback, developing an equitable framework, and carrying out engagement framework trainings to the city staff.

Next, based on feedback from previous pop-up events, round-tables, and department interviews, the group discussed takeaways, lessons learned, and brainstormed preliminary ideas for the Guide. The second half of the meeting was organized as a round-table with CAG members to discuss the following questions:

1. Barriers and issues on why engagement may be strained, limited, or not happening
2. Opportunities during engagement
3. Feedback, suggestions, or opinions on ways to engage the community more

Meeting Attendees:

CAG

Cindy Pendergast, Neighborworks Housing Solutions

Cynthia Hodges, African American Association

Dwight Buckland, Black Owned Brockton

Jamie Hodges, African American Association of Brockton

Karla Rogers, Campello Business Association

Monica Lombardo, Boys and Girls club of Metro South

Natalie Jean, Brockton Redevelopment Authority

Phyllis Ellis, Brockton NAACP

CAG Organizers

Rob May, Planning Dept., Lead

Evan Sears, Planning

Durre Ali, Planning

Erin Veiga, Grants

Jane McNulty, Grants

Celia Canavan, Mayor's Office

Nathan Williams, Planning

Jennifer Pangborn, WSP, TCP Lead

Sean Scott, WSP

Mary Ellen Wiederwohl, AFA

Ross Van Dongen, AFA

Zach Etzin, AFA

Rachel Reilly, AFA

Summaries and Takeaways

COMMON BARRIERS:
WHAT IS KEEPING YOU FROM BEING ENGAGED?

1. Engagement often feels “invite-only”
2. Lack of clarity and communication in languages other than English
3. Lack of “simple terms” makes conversations unapproachable
4. Commitment requirement feels overwhelming, or the reward for participation isn’t clear
5. Timeline for responses or implementation is too long. Participants need instant feedback.
6. Impacts of projects are not clearly communicated

OTHER KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Most people don’t know about existing city engagement events
2. Conference room meetings feel less accessible compared to community events out in the neighborhood.
3. Generally, more education is needed on root causes of city issues and the impact Public Engagement and infrastructure can have on the city.
4. Meetings need to be more accessible and public: it is important to be mindful of venues, incentives, activities, or other attractors that may lure more people in.

MEETING - 2

Recap

Hosted: July 25th 2024

At the second meeting, the CAG was presented with case studies, precedents, and engagement tools based on the previous meeting and feedback to discuss. This meeting was organized to collect feedback to develop a framework for the Engagement Policy Guide. This meeting was held virtually through Zoom.

The first part of the presentation focused on discussing USDOT's Meaningful Public Involvement Guide and its recommendations. CAG members were asked to share their thoughts on the guide and how well it aligned with their own priorities for their constituent groups. The CAG was presented with 8 values for meaningful involvement and were asked to pick their top 3 priorities. After that, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of public participation was introduced to frame the different levels of engagement that define the public's role during public outreach events and provide examples of engagement techniques that align with the spectrum.

Additionally, the CAG was presented with best practice case studies for engagement and were asked to vote on their favorites. The meeting was closed with a meaningful dialog on some relevant case studies and key challenges for the City of Brockton, closing with final reflections and priorities of the CAG they'd like codified in the Guide.

Meeting Attendees:

CAG

Cindy Pendergast, Neighborworks Housing Solutions

Cynthia Hodges, African American Association

Danny Steele

Derek Heim, Boys & Girls Club

Dwight Buckland, Black Owned Brockton

Iolando Spinola, Brockton Interfaith Community

Jamal Brathwaite, DW Field Park Association

Jamie Hodges, African American Association of Brockton

Karla Rogers, Campello Business Association

Michaela Lauture, Brockton Interfaith Community

Monica Lombardo, Boys and Girls club of Metro South

Patrick Quinn, DW Field Park Association

Phyllis Ellis, Brockton NAACP

CAG Organizers

Evan Sears, Planning

Durre Ali, Planning

Erin Veiga, Grants

Jennifer Pangborn, WSP, TCP Lead

Sean Scott, WSP

Aishwarya Mohgaonkar, WSP

Ross Van Dongen, AFA

Zach Etzin, AFA

Rachel Reilly, AFA

Summaries and Takeaways



USDOT'S MEANINGFUL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDE

1. The more information the better
2. Need diverse, low-cost and quick forms of communication
3. The sooner, the better
4. Building trust is critical
5. Consider immigrant communities



MEETING - 3

Recap

Hosted August 22nd 2024

The third CAG meeting was a review of the proposed outline for the Engagement Policy Guide. The meeting was held in person at City Hall, and lunch was provided. Some new organizations joined the meeting which required a brief refresher of the previous two CAG meetings and resources before diving into the policy outline.

When discussing the outline for the document, CAG members stressed the desire for the title to include the word “policy” to demonstrate that the city is committing to a new way of conducting public engagement. “Public Engagement Policy Guide” was agreed upon at the meeting and is how this document received its name. Members also stressed the need for action-oriented language that provides more streamlined guidelines for different engagement situations. This would include minimum actions for engagement activities, or “At minimums” for an engagement to satisfy the Policy Guide. Members also reiterated the need to have it translated once completed into different languages so their community can utilize the guide themselves.

In addition to discussing the Guide outline, CAG members shared their desire for the City to shift the culture around engagement and offer more transparency. Members expressed discomfort with meeting at City Hall, feeling it is too formal or unwelcoming, particularly for youth. Lastly, for the guide and all other engagement opportunities, multi-language translations were identified as critical to inclusive engagement with residents.

Meeting Attendees:

CAG

Cynthia Hodges, Homeless Forgotten Heroes

Dwight Buckland, Black Owned Brockton

Djanine Ineine, Brockton Interfaith Community

Eric Thomas Ronsley, Iron Heart Academy

Gamaliel Lauture, Brockton Interfaith Community

George Brickhouse, Dare 2 B Great

Jamie Hodges, African American Association of Brockton

Karla Rogers, Campello Business Association

Monica Lombardo, Boys and Girls Club of Metro South

Patrick Quinn, DW Field Park Association

Paul Umano, Old Colony Planning Council

CAG Organizers

Evan Sears, Planning

Durre Ali, Planning

Erin Veiga, Grants

Eisha George, DEI manager, City of Brockton

Jennifer Pangborn, WSP, TCP Lead

Sean Scott, WSP

Aishwarya Mohgaonkar, WSP

Ross Van Dongen, AFA

Zach Etzin, AFA

Summaries and Takeaways



COMMUNICATION GAPS

1. Language barriers between the city and communities restrict effective communication in meetings and events
2. Lack of inclusive information dissemination restricting children, teenagers, and migrant/ immigrant communities from participating
3. Lack of translation services at events

Policy Recommendations

1. Formalize communication channels
2. Include a guidebook of organizations that have translating services.
3. Document and mandate ways to include communities more.
4. Include policies that incentivize collaboration through city's efforts.
5. Create "minimum actions" to properly engage the community across the IAP2 spectrum, similar to a checklist for more consistent engagement.
6. Establish translation standards across all forms of engagement.

MEETING - 4

Recap

Hosted January 30th, 2025

The fourth CAG meeting was a final presentation and celebration of the CAG, featuring the debut and review of the Draft Policy Guide for the CAG's review and final comment. Lunch was provided, and the meeting was held at the Brockton Public Library.

The meeting included a recap and overview of the program, the CAG's purpose, and recapped previous CAG Meetings as some organizations sent new staff. WSP staff presented the key components of the guide for feedback on the structure and content before diving into a page by page review with CAG Members.

The meetings included lively discussion with constructive suggestions on how to improve key areas of the guide, while celebrating portions where CAG input shone through. While the guide's primary audience is city staff, CAG members expressed an interest in adding a chapter specifically oriented to a community audience that outlines how a resident or member of the public can use this guide, or what this guide might mean to them. CAG members also desired a reorganization of the document that places the policy recommendations first, and background (such as the CAG summaries) toward the back of the document. The various engagement tools were well received.

In closing, the CAG expressed their gratitude to be involved and a desire to remain involved in a similar way moving forward and expand such an effort to include more residents.

Meeting Attendees:

CAG

Cindy Pendergast, Neighborworks Housing Solutions

Cynthia Hodges, Homeless Forgotten Heroes

Dwight Buckland, Black Owned Brockton

Trinette S. Hall Ineine, Brockton Interfaith Community

George Brickhouse, Dare 2 B Great

Jamie Hodges, African American Association of Brockton

Karla Rogers, Campello Business Association

Leandra Monteiro, Cape Verdean Association of Brockton

Monica Lombardo, Boys and Girls Club of Metro South

Patrick Quinn, DW Field Park Association

Sherwinn Brile, Black Owned Brockton

Tatiana Moniz, Cape Verdean Association of Brockton

CAG Organizers

Durre Ali, City of Brockton Planning

Evan Sears, City of Brockton Planning

Rob May, City of Brockton Planning

Jennifer Pangborn, WSP, TCP Lead

Sean Scott, WSP

Zach Etzin, AFA

Olivia James, Barrett Planning LLC

Summaries and Takeaways

SUGGESTIONS

KEY AREAS OF IMPROVEMENTS IN THE GUIDE

1. Make it clearer for city staff regarding when and how to choose an engagement tool or technique from the Appendix
2. How engagement is done needs to evolve to align with community changes over the past decades
3. Establish record keeping minimums and leave-behind worksheets that City staff can use for effective implementation of the guide

INCORPORATED RECOMMENDATIONS



Include “Inform, Involve, Empower” in the document title.

Develop a roster of community-based organizations for the City, and a guidebook of organizations that have translating services.

Develop a worksheet that City staff can use to regularly implement the minimum actions policies contained within the Participation Strategies and Tools.

WAY FORWARDS

FOR SUCCESSFUL LONG TERM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDE

1. Use simple language when communicating with the community
2. City should communicate project timelines more clearly and consistently
3. There is a common desire amongst CAG members for the future guide to be oriented towards the public and community members.

FINAL TAKEAWAYS

INVOLVE

Inclusivity and Communication

1. Use simple language when engaging with the community
2. Develop a feedback loop
3. Establish & formalise diverse and quick mediums of communication
4. Develop an accessible repository of translation services
5. Establish translation standards
6. Establish experiential engagement strategies with incentives that will encourage the participation of children, the youth, and the older population

SHARE

Transparency

1. City should communicate project timelines more clearly and consistently
2. Create a more centralised and diverse approach to information sharing

SUSTAIN

Long-term Implementation

1. Make it clearer for city staff regarding when and how to choose an engagement tool from the Appendix
2. How engagement is done needs to evolve to align with community changes over the decades
3. Establish record keeping minimums and leave-behind worksheets that City staff can use for effective implementation of the guide













3

PILLARS OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Effective public engagement in the City of Brockton is key to building trust, empowering residents, and achieving successful outcomes. To create meaningful engagement, it's important to know Brockton's diverse community and foster relationships that last beyond individual projects. Prioritize listening to residents, using their preferred communication methods, and ensuring they see that their input has been acknowledged and is valued.

Engagement should begin early, with a proactive and consistent approach. A one-size-fits-all strategy won't work in Brockton's varied neighborhoods. Instead, use multiple channels, such as family-friendly events (block parties, games, and movie nights), social media outreach, and in-person engagement to address challenges like the digital divide. Video formats can also help deliver information to those who prefer watching or listening over reading.

Brockton can implement a proactive feedback loop to track how community input shapes projects. Public education about city processes ensures residents feel informed and included. Establishing a dedicated group of community leaders and organizations helps maintain consistent representation, while translation services ensure outreach reaches Brockton's multicultural population.

By broadening the discussion base and "meeting people where they are," the City of Brockton can strengthen relationships, build trust, and support local decision-making. This approach increases the legitimacy of city actions, empowers neighborhoods, and improves the chances of achieving outcomes that truly reflect community needs. Through transparent communication and inclusive engagement, Brockton can create a thriving, connected, and responsive community where everyone's voice matters.

The eight pillars on the following pages were developed as a foundation to what meaningful engagement means in Brockton. While city staff should strive to follow all eight pillars of meaningful engagement when connecting with community members, the following three pillars were ranked the most important by the CAG.

1. Conduct public involvement early and consistently.

2. Be inclusive with public engagement.

3. Measure and quantify public involvement successes.

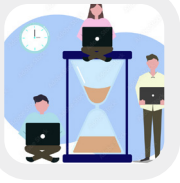
These pillars are labeled with green text on the following page.

CAG INPUT

During the 2nd CAG meeting on July 25, 2024, CAG members reviewed the eight pillars and provided feedback on which of the pillars resonated the most, and selected the three highlighted above as the top priorities. Additionally, members spoke about the importance of transparency (knowing who is working on a project), measuring success (knowing if and how goals are met), and making any public touch point fun and memorable for young and old alike.

CONDUCT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EARLY AND CONSISTENTLY

Engaging early and often builds support by informing, activating, and mobilizing people. It ensures diverse perspectives are heard, addressing concerns early. Consistent engagement empowers leaders, fosters collaboration, and develops shared values for long-term success. By creating connections and amplifying voices, early engagement drives stronger, more impactful outcomes.



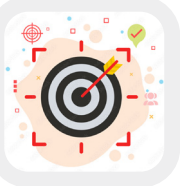
BE INCLUSIVE WITH PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Engage a diverse range of participants, ensuring all voices are heard. Involve community members from various groups, provide necessary accommodations for inclusivity, and offer flexible activities to meet different needs. Focus on understanding everyone's experiences to identify what works best for effective and meaningful participation.



MEASURE AND QUANTIFY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUCCESSES

Measure public involvement success through quantitative output (e.g., participant numbers, surveys, website hits) and qualitative outcomes (e.g., participant feedback on event notice, input value, and how their feedback was utilized). This helps evaluate both the reach and impact of the engagement efforts.



CLEARLY DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To plan an activity effectively, first identify who needs to be involved based on the task at hand and assess their roles. Set clear, SMART goals and review engagement methods, best practices, tools, and feedback mechanisms. Gather input from participants to refine goals and approaches, ensuring the activity remains effective and aligned with objectives.



KEEP PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPEN AND TRANSPARENT

Ensure public involvement is transparent and inclusive by establishing clear policies, communicating openly, holding open meetings, and addressing barriers. Uphold decision-making transparency, provide accessible data, and maintain regular updates to engage all relevant parties effectively and equitably.



MAKE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEMORABLE AND FUN.

Create a comfortable, engaging, and interactive environment for attendees, focusing on fun, hands-on activities that appeal to all senses. Foster personal connections by making activities relatable and encouraging participants to share experiences. Utilize visually appealing infographics, maps, and videos to make public engagement memorable.



REMAIN RESPECTFUL DURING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Maintain respect in public interactions by actively listening and giving full attention. Encourage inclusivity by amplifying quieter voices. Communicate clearly and respectfully, creating a safe environment with clear guidelines. Acknowledge and respect cultural differences, and be honest about what you know or don't know.



BUILD CAPACITY FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To build organizational capacity, create a dedicated public involvement role, support staff training and certification, and allocate a budget for both internal training and external consultants. Integrate public involvement professionals in decision-making, provide engagement opportunities throughout project lifecycles, and ensure budgeting flexibility for each project's needs.



4

PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

To align public engagement efforts effectively with the City of Brockton's goals, it is important to understand how input will be used. Public engagement should be intentional, focused, and tailored to align with Brockton's unique needs, ensuring residents and stakeholders feel heard and included in decision making during project phases. To do this effectively, the strategies and techniques in this toolkit are aligned with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)'s framework for participation (as identified in USDOT's Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making). This framework aligns impacts on decision making to participation goals and objectives, across levels of impact on decision making - inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. For example, informing residents about new infrastructure plans or empowering them to shape policies builds trust and transparency. A clear distinction between the goal versus promise is critical. Clearly communicating the purpose of engagement and setting realistic outcomes will help manage community expectations and foster mutual trust. One of the goals of this toolkit is to enhance engagement opportunities and raise up local voices by utilizing best practices like the IAP2 framework.

Finally, selecting the right technique is key to success. Techniques should align with the City's goals. By embracing intentional, focused, and strategic public engagement, Brockton can strengthen relationships with residents, improve decision-making processes, and ensure that projects are meaningful and aligned with the needs of its diverse community. Public engagement, when done thoughtfully, becomes a powerful tool for achieving shared goals.

FIGURE 1-1: Spectrum of Public Involvement, IAP2, as referenced by USDOT

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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ADAPTING IAP2 FOR BROCKTON

Based on input from the CAG, the Guide adapted the spectrum of engagement to the following three that best align with the city's and community's goals.

- INFORM
- INVOLVE
- EMPOWER

These levels ensure that engagement is intentional, meaningful, and supports the meaningful engagement pillars established through this process. The following pages will align the strategies and techniques to these three levels of engagement impact that best suit Brockton's needs and community desires. They will also include examples from communities around the world that succesfully used the associated engagement strategies. For example, tools like public meetings, surveys, workshops, or collaborative discussions are chosen based on the desired level of involvement. This approach ensures that engagement efforts are intentional, focused, and appropriate to the project's goals and community expectations. These strategies are intended to be a guide and should be modified over time as successes are realized.

By prioritizing these three levels of engagement impact, Brockton can foster transparency, build trust, and create meaningful opportunities for residents to shape their community, helping ensure projects reflect the needs and voices of the community.

MINIMUM ACTIONS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The following callout highlights evergreen actions that the city should employ on every project to provide meaningful and inclusive public engagement. These minimum actions are a starting point for City staff on every project they lead to set themselves up to successfully engage the public. These actions reflect best practices for public engagement and critical engagement needs identified by the CAG.

Increasing Impact on the Decision

	INFORM	INVOLVE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal	To Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and / or solutions.	To partner with the public in decision-making by developing alternatives and identifying preferred solutions. Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public on the preferred solution and process.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed. We will look at your ideas and advice when formulating solutions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide and take your advice on solutions and recommendations to the maximum extent possible.

Credit: IAP2 Spectrum via USDOT; adapted for City of Brockton

INFORM

Informing people in the City of Brockton means providing clear, accessible, and accurate updates about ongoing and upcoming projects that impact the community and/or study area. By sharing information about project goals, schedules, and impacts in an unbiased manner, the city can keep residents informed. This can help build stronger connections between the government, residents, and business owners, encourage future involvement, provide updates to previous engagements, and benefit everyone who lives and works in the city with knowledge of what is going on. Informing people can also provide details on how to get involved and/or stay updated on progress and future details.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES:

- Email Notifications
- Information Hotlines
- Interactive Displays / Kiosks
- Mailers / Postcards
- News Stories / Interviews
- Pop-up Events
- Project Briefing / Open House
- Project Website / Updates
- Public Presentations
- Social Media Site
- Text Campaign
- Town Halls
- Yard Signs

WHEN TO INVOLVE

! **PROJECT IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION**

! **PROJECT DELIVERY**

Initiation

Conceptualization

Design

! **IMPLEMENTATION**

Informing the community is critical when Initiating and/or Implementing a Project. The earlier they're informed, the more inclusive the engagement

MINIMUM ACTIONS

- Develop 1-Page Fact Sheet of the project/program/initiative for print and Online viewing. It should include:
  - *What the project is.*
  - *Which department is leading*
  - *Where the project is happening*
  - *Project timeline.*
  - *Contact information*
  - *QR code to Online resource.*
- Translate materials into English, Spanish, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and French.
- Share Fact Sheet Directly with Community Organizations.
- Post Fact Sheet at public places (Library, School, Parks, Train Station)

EXAMPLES

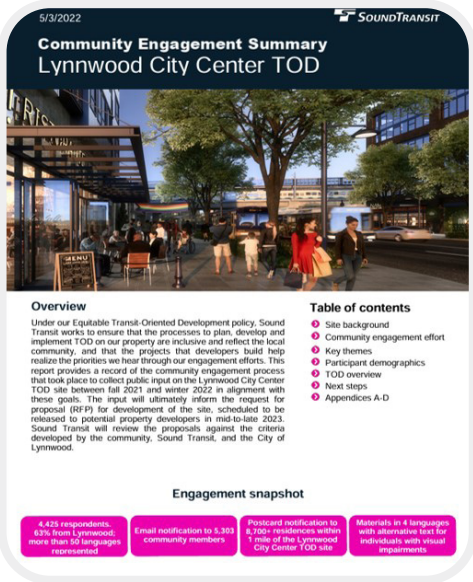


YARD SIGNS: Urban League Slow Down Campaign

The "Slow Down St. Louis" campaign, launched by the Urban League, addresses the city's urgent speeding problem. Aimed at curbing "vehicular violence," the initiative raises awareness about the dangers of reckless driving. Urban Engagement Specialists work tirelessly five days a week, distributing and placing yard signs throughout neighborhoods in St. Louis City and County. The signs, bearing the message "Slow Down St. Louis," serve as a visible reminder for drivers to prioritize safety. This grassroots effort underscores the importance of community action in fostering safer streets and protecting lives through heightened awareness and reduced speeding. It was also a low-cost initiative in both materials, time, and labor to create and distribute the signs across the community. This shows that not all effective engagement tools need to be expensive. **>> Using yard signs is a great way to reach people in neighborhoods and bring awareness to events, campaigns, and grassroots initiatives. These can be reused and moved frequently if needed.**

PROJECT BRIEFING: Lynwood City Center TOD

This brochure summarizes the Lynnwood City Center TOD community engagement efforts led by Sound Transit. Conducted in late 2021 and early 2022, the process gathered public input to guide future development proposals, ensuring projects reflect community priorities. Key highlights include 4,425 respondents, outreach to 5,303 community members, and notifications within a 1-mile radius. Materials were provided in four languages and accessible formats to ensure inclusivity. The feedback will inform developer proposals in 2023, evaluated by Sound Transit and the City of Lynnwood. **>> This is a great way to close the loop and show success of a project after it is implemented.**


5/3/2022 SoundTransit

Community Engagement Summary
Lynnwood City Center TOD

Overview

Under our Equitable Transit-Oriented Development policy, Sound Transit works to ensure that the processes to plan, develop and implement TOD on our property are inclusive and reflect the local community, and that the projects that developers build help realize the priorities we hear through our engagement efforts. This report provides a record of the community engagement process that took place to collect public input on the Lynnwood City Center TOD site between fall 2021 and winter 2022 in alignment with these goals. The input will ultimately inform the request for proposal (RFP) for development of the site, scheduled to be released to potential property developers in mid-to-late 2023. Sound Transit will review the proposals against the criteria developed by the community, Sound Transit, and the City of Lynnwood.

Table of contents

- Site background
- Community engagement effort
- Key themes
- Participant demographics
- TOD overview
- Next steps
- Appendices A-D

Engagement snapshot

4,425 respondents, 63% from Lynnwood; more than 50 languages represented

Email notification to 5,303 community members

Postcard notification to 8,700+ residences within 1 mile of the Lynnwood City Center TOD site

Materials in 4 languages with alternative text for individuals with visual impairments

NOTES FOR SUCCESS:

- Translation is key - especially in Brockton where numerous languages are spoken besides english. communities that are multilingual.
- Can be used at different steps in project delivery
- Simple and concise language should be used as much as possible.
- Don't take knowledge for granted when informing:

INVOLVE

Involving people in the City of Brockton means collaboratively working with them to develop ideas, alternatives, and solutions for decision-making. Involving people focuses on engaging with the community throughout the process to ensure public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and incorporated. The City is committed to inclusivity during involvement and strives to accurately reflect community input and desires. Public ideas and advice will be carefully considered and integrated into the formulation of ideas whenever possible. By involving people intentionally and effectively, the City aims to create outcomes that align with community needs, build trust, and create a sense of shared ownership in the decision-making process.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES:

- **Brainstorming Workshops**
- **Design Charrettes**
- **Drop-in Locations**
- **Fairs and Pop-up Tables**
- **Focus Group Sessions**
- **Culturally Specific Engagement**
- **Kids Sketching Their Ideas**
- **Photo and Video Contests**
- **Public Surveys**
- **Public Workshops**
- **Stakeholder Interviews**
- **SWOT Activities**
- **Virtual Reality Tools / Applications**
- **Visioning Sessions**

WHEN TO INVOLVE

! **PROJECT IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION**

PROJECT DELIVERY

! *Initiation*

! *Conceptualization*

Design

! **IMPLEMENTATION**

Involving the community should happen during key project decision points, as it establishes a sense of ownership for community members while helping them navigate potential changes.

MINIMUM ACTIONS

- Host a Meeting or Workshop that educates attendees on the progress to date while providing clear instructions for the feedback desired. Provide tools for attendees to mark materials and leave input.
- Always explain what type of feedback is desired, and explain how that feedback will be used moving forward.
- Create an Online comment portal for the public to submit comments and questions.
- Host at least 2 pop up events in public spaces, bringing information to community directly to provide input.

EXAMPLES



DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS: Meet on the Street for Armour Road Complete Streets

The City of North Kansas City, Missouri organized a public parklet pop-up event to engage residents, stakeholders, and political leaders. The event showcased a Complete Streets project, featuring a temporary road diet with protected bike lanes, pedestrian refuge areas, and curb bump-outs. The reconfigured roadway, new bike lanes, and crosswalks provided a tangible experience of planned improvements. Parking spaces were transformed into parklets with games, activities, and engagement exercises designed for families and children, fostering community involvement and understanding of the proposed changes aimed at enhancing safety and accessibility for all road users. **>> The city gathered input, got consensus from elected officials and business owners, and laid out a concept design to improve safety.**

KID SKETCHING IDEAS: Growing Up Boulder

Growing Up Boulder's (GUB) project aimed to enhance the city's Comprehensive Housing Strategy while leveraging faculty expertise in sustainable neighborhood design. Students proposed recommendations impacting natural areas, recreation spaces, greenways, alternative transport, renewable energy, mixed-use, and safety features. Key initiatives included creating a child-friendly city map and organizing workshops to involve youth in planning. The project ultimately transformed GUB into an organization dedicated to engaging youth in all urban planning and civic activities, ensuring sustainability and inclusivity in its approach to community development. **>> Using simple, fun, and interactive tools to engage youth in formal planning processes in a way that allows city staff to utilize their input.**



NOTES FOR SUCCESS:

- Simple instruction tools can often be more effective than complicated exercises. Make the barrier to entry as low as possible to get the most amount of people excited and engaged.
- Meet people where they are, and host pop-ups and workshops on site or in community spaces.

EMPOWER

Empowering the public means placing final decision-making authority directly in their hands, ensuring their voices shape the preferred solutions and processes. This approach reflects a deep commitment to transparency, trust, and collaboration. By actively listening to public input and implementing their decisions, the City of Brockton can demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives and foster a sense of ownership among stakeholders. Empowering the public maximizes the impact of community advice, enabling solutions that align closely with collective needs and aspirations. It builds stronger relationships, encourages active participation, and reinforces accountability, ultimately creating sustainable outcomes that truly reflect the will and wisdom of the people involved.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES:

- **Project Selection/Prioritization Surveys**
- **Community Advisory Committees**
- **Culturally Specific Engagement**
- **Design Charettes & Report Outs**
- **Kids/Youth Sketching Their Ideas**
- **Project Documentation made Public**
- **Social Media (Hashtags)**
- **Steering committees (with decision making authority)**
- **Storyteling Sessions**
- **Training / Educational Activities**

WHEN TO EMPOWER

! **PROJECT IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION**

PROJECT DELIVERY

! *Initiation*

! *Conceptualization*

! *Design*

! **IMPLEMENTATION**

The more empowered community members are during the process, the more successfully projects get implemented. Empowering community builds trust and consensus, and community voice directs the outcomes.

MINIMUM ACTIONS

- Define mechanisms for how public input will be actioned to influence implementation of physical infrastructure or the design of policy.
- Compensate Community Members that engage in a Community Advisory Group or Steering Committee, acknowledging their inputs are valuable pieces of information for successful project delivery.
- Include educational elements that teach community members about the technical elements of city projects to improve their understanding and empower them to engage more deeply.

EXAMPLES



CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT: Love Letters to South Street

In Philadelphia, shaping the future of urban main streets like South Street required collaboration. Through six months of weekly steering committee meetings and engagement with small business owners, residents, and visitors, a human-centered vision was co-created. This process included 2,400 survey responses, three virtual focus groups, and open data analysis. Creative approaches like memory mapping (documenting places that have lasting meaning to respondents) and "love letter" postcards that document what people love about the street fostered community connections and reimagined possibilities. Together, these efforts aim to redefine the design, programming, and essence of one of the nation's most iconic streets. **>>This outreach strategy places a high value on personal experiences of attendees, which guide the Citys approach to placemaking and cultural preservation.**

KIDS/YOUTH SKETCHING THEIR IDEAS: These Blocks are My History, Building up Youth Voices

Youth-focused storytelling and engagement are essential for including the next generation in planning and development. Biddeford, Maine's 2011 Downtown Master Plan mentions "youth" or "students" 157 times across its 217 pages. Through visioning and storytelling, Biddeford's youth, once disheartened about their town's future, have found renewed pride and hope. One such tool was a youth engagement council to get local youth engaged in City government. These efforts emphasize storytelling and interviews as powerful tools for youth inclusion and community revitalization. Intentionally engaging the next generation can create long-term benefits for communities. **>> Getting youth voices at the table encourages adults to listen, get engaged, and empowers the next generation.**



NOTES FOR SUCCESS:

- Empowering the community requires giving people decision making power. Carefully consider whether and how community member decisions can be integrated to decision making processes or drive project outcomes.

PREPARING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Preparing engagement plans that align with the City of Brockton's pillars of meaningful engagement requires a deliberate and thoughtful approach to ensure the community feels knowledgeable, heard, valued, and empowered. The engagement framework prioritizes three levels of impact based on the IAP2 Framework and refined to meet Brockton's needs: Inform, Involve, and Empower, all designed to support meaningful interactions that reflect Brockton's diverse community needs. Each level is linked to specific strategies and tools—like briefings for sharing information, workshops to gather input, or collaborative discussions to empower decision making — ensuring alignment with engagement pillars and holding high community expectations. Intentionality is key. Understanding the purpose of engagement, aligning the right tool, managing expectations, and clearly communicating outcomes establish trust and transparency. This engagement toolkit underscores the importance of tailoring engagement strategies to Brockton's unique neighborhoods, recognizing no single method fits all.

Meaningful engagement begins early, is proactive, and utilizes varied strategies and tools to address barriers like the digital divide, work schedules, generation gaps, languages, ownership, interest, comprehension of narrative, and others. Translation services and representation from community leaders ensure inclusivity in outreach, while feedback loops track how public input informs decisions. By "meeting people where they are," Brockton can build trust and strengthen relationships, all while fostering community-driven decision-making. Ultimately, prioritizing the pillars of meaningful engagement ensures that city aligns the right strategies and tools to engage the public for any project in ways that continue to encourage and welcome people to participate.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The depth of community engagement should reflect previous engagement, the extent of project impacts, and the people living within and near the project area. Some projects may have limited opportunities for engagement, while others may need extensive engagement. Understanding the impacts of engagement activities on budget and timeline, project managers should consider when engagement will be most efficient and effective in determining project outcomes while integrating the community's voice into the project in a dignified, respectful, and meaningful manner.
There is no one-size fits-all approach to community engagement. The development of a community engagement plan (as a project is starting) should be thoughtful and intentional: **community engagement is not a box to check**. Lack of thoughtfulness can impair project outcomes and diminish community trust in the City. When developing a community engagement plan reflect on how the principles for meaningful public involvement to inform the engagement process. Lastly, it is important for the City to meet the community where they are by bringing the engagement to the people, making it as easy as possible for the public to help shape their community.


COMMUTER RAIL
INBOUND
STAND BACK






COMMUTER RAIL

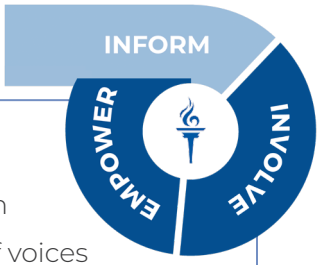


APPENDICES

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

01. Brainstorming Workshops
02. Building Block Exercises
03. Community Advisory Committees
04. Community Mural Paintings
05. Community Wordclouds
06. Culturally-Specific Engagement
07. Design Charettes
08. Drop-in Locations
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10. Fairs and Pop-up Tables / Events
11. Focus Group Sessions
12. Information Hotlines
13. Interactive Displays / Kiosks
14. Kids / Youth Sketching Their Ideas
15. Mailers / Fliers
16. News Stories / Interviews
17. Photo and Video Contests
18. Podcasting
19. Presentations (reflecting previous input)
20. Project Briefings
21. Project Documentation made Public
22. Project Website / Updates
23. Public Presentations
24. Public Surveys
25. Public Workshops
26. Sharing out Public Survey Input
27. Social Media (Hashtags)
28. Social Media Site
29. Stakeholder Interviews
30. Steering committees (with decision making authority)
31. Storytelling Sessions
32. SWOT Activities
33. Text Campaign
34. Town Halls
35. Training / Educational Activities
36. Up-front Information (ahead of activities)
37. Virtual Reality Tools / Applications
38. Visioning Sessions
39. Yard Signs

BRAINSTORMING WORKSHOPS



A brainstorming workshop stands apart from typical workshops through its dynamic and collaborative nature. While standard workshops often focus on training, knowledge sharing, or structured problem-solving with predefined outcomes, brainstorming workshops emphasize creativity, open dialogue, and the generation of a wide range of ideas. These sessions thrive on diversity, actively involving participants from various backgrounds, and including community members to provide fresh perspectives on pressing local issues. Unlike traditional workshops, brainstorming sessions prioritize inclusivity and unfiltered idea flow, aiming to co-create solutions that reflect collective input, fostering a stronger sense of community ownership and engagement in the decision-making process.

BENEFITS:

- Enhances collaboration
- Raises up a diverisity of voices
- Encourages creativity from participants
- Provides for diverse perspectives

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Host at a neutral and welcoming location.
- Provide flexibility on how to listen and encourage creativity and sharing
- Be open to pivoting based on what you hear.
- Define the problem clearly
- Be transparent on how input will be used



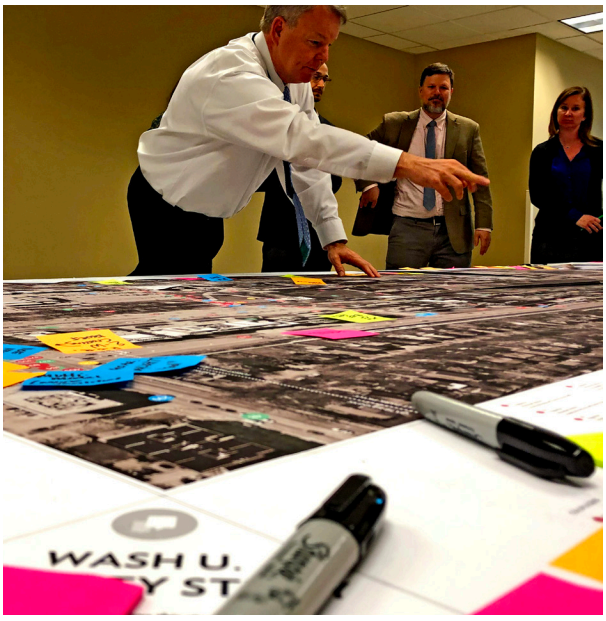
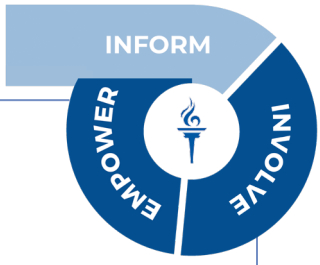


Image: Brainstorming workshop for a university. The problem defined and agreed to solve was safety for pedestrians. The participants were empowered to identify solutions and prioritize next steps and where to spend money for improvements



BUILDING BLOCK EXERCISES

Building block exercises are creative ways to get the community to physically design their communities with simple figures and tools. They encourage active participation and literally puts design tools in the public's hands, allowing them the freedom and opportunity to reimagine their community and share their vision with the city, stakeholders, and other members of the public. Building blocks provide an all-ages entry point into city design. These exercises help bring people together in the spirit of play and imagination. Rather than a typical meeting where attendees are more prepared to critique rather that create, these exercises encourage playfulness and curiosity about the different ways we can shape our communities. These exercises can release the public's creativity to imagine new possibilities for their communities.

BENEFITS:

- Visualizes what can be in real time
- Encourages innovation and creativity from participants
- Interactive and direct way to influence decision making

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Have enough materials for the desired number of attendees
- Allow attendees enough time to ideate and be creative
- Provide clear instructions and explain how the ideas created will influence the project
- May be time intensive and expensive due to materials needed

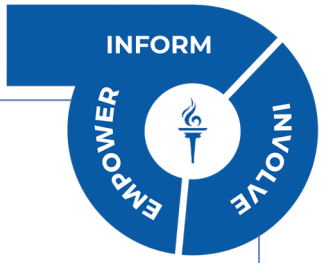




Images: Building Block Exercise for the Innovation Mile Master Plan in Noblesville, IN. This exercise allowed participants to lay out the future development and 'visualize' the future

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES / GROUPS

Community Advisory Groups ('CAG') is a great tool to engage a small to medium sized group of activists, community organizations, and interest members who are able to commit time to meeting regularly with City Officials to co-create a plan, design, or policy with direct public input. The group should be involved from the beginning of the project, providing input across all phases, balancing the input of more technical practitioners. A CAG does not mean other engagement strategies shouldn't be leveraged for broader public input. CAGs operate best when participants are paid for their time, they are attended consistently by the same person or representative, and have a clear purpose for each meeting. CAGs may be advisory (reviewing or advising) or directive (providing instructions or making decisions).



BENEFITS:

- Consistent and informed participants
- Provides direct exposure to project development
- Focused conversations
- Members feel valued and important to the projects success

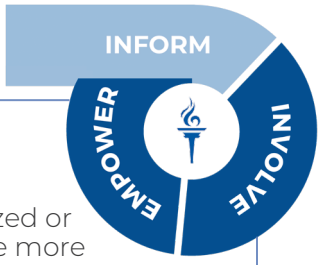
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Engagement budget needs to account for CAG Stipends
- Requires consistent engagement by same attendees to minimize doubling back
- Post-meeting report outs are critical for documenting input.
- Initial education may be needed





Images: Community Advisory Group (CAG) convened to inform this guide. Members were engaged in person and virtually over 4 meetings, and they will be compensated at the close of the CAG



COMMUNITY MURAL PAINTINGS

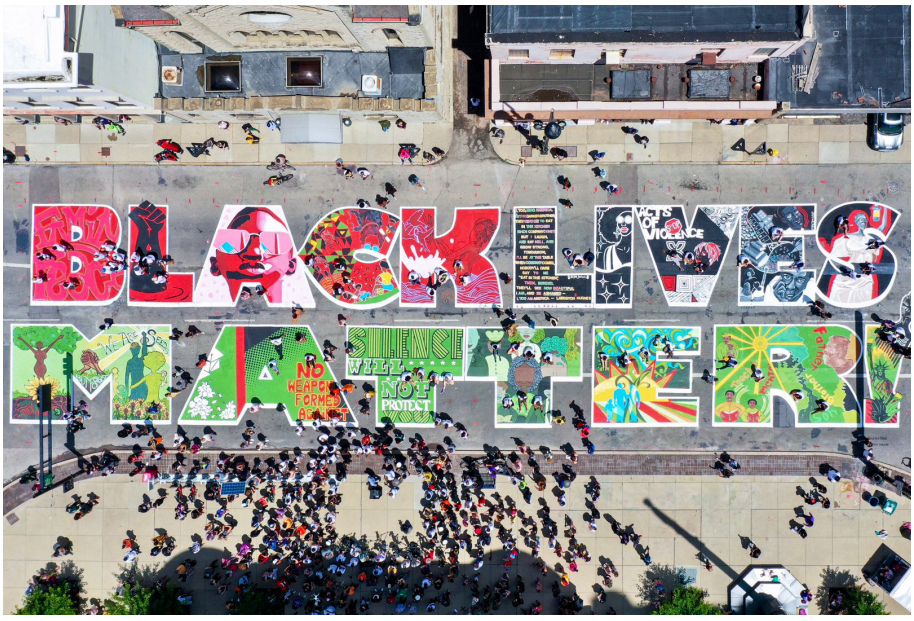
A mural painting can be an effective and fun engagement tool that instills a sense of belonging & pride within the community. Murals can be made anywhere - parks, neighborhoods, businesses, or even on streets & sidewalks. They communicate values, strengthen cultural identities, or advocate for social change. Beautiful, vibrant designs can uplift neighborhoods by making them look attractive and inviting, sometimes reviving lost identities of dilapidated buildings, streets, or neighborhoods; while spreading a community-informed message to the world. They can also attract tourists to neighborhoods, supporting local businesses and attracting investment. Mural painting are a great strategy that involves and empowers the community to physically document their voice while beautifying their community.

BENEFITS:

- Transforms underutilized or dilapidated areas to be more vibrant & attractive
- Encourages people to pause and explore on foot
- Represents & promotes local community, culture, and local artists
- Has the power to spread meaningful messages

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

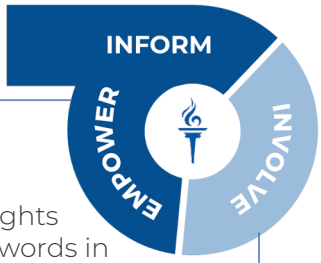
- Obtain permits / permissions before painting on any surface
- Collaborate with local organizations and artists
- Adhere to local laws and regulations for placement, language, timeframe, size, etc





Left: A 'Black Lives Matter' mural in front of City Hall at the city of Cincinnati
Right: Community Mural intended to legitimize marginalized ideas and identities in South Dakota

COMMUNITY WORD CLOUDS



Community word clouds are simple, text based visualizations that document themes, values, and ideas that are important to the public. This strategy can be incorporated into multiple project phases to document key words that pop up often during engagement events or themes and priorities the community expresses in surveys and public comments. While documenting these comments by themselves is necessary and valuable, a word cloud can highlight concepts and words that show up often and help identify the most critical values a community holds. Word cloud exercises encourage people to share and make their voices heard, facilitate discussion, and help distill community priorities. Word clouds can be made quickly and simply through survey software like mentimeter, google forms, and microsoft forms, or made manually.

BENEFITS:

- Documents and highlights the community's own words in the project
- Encourages participation
- Identifies key themes and priorities for the project sponsor to incorporate and address
- Simple and quick way to visualize community feedback

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Make sure there is time for the community to share out what and why they shared, otherwise staff will have to Interpret without guidance
- Allow for responses in multiple languages



Image: Community word cloud developed for the Creative the Future's Community Engagement

CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

A culturally specific event is designed to bring communities together and celebrate people from a specific cultural background; their heritage, customs, and traditions. Generally done in collaboration with that community and/or organizations that best represent them, these events can be executed by setting up stalls, through interactive activities, music, performing arts, visual arts, food, workshops or any other form of expression. This strategy is beneficial to promote inclusivity, build social cohesion and trust, and empower the community by providing a platform for them to tell their stories. Sometimes, this platform can also be useful to address specific issues, if any or just for people to gain a deeper understanding of the community's unique perspectives and challenges.



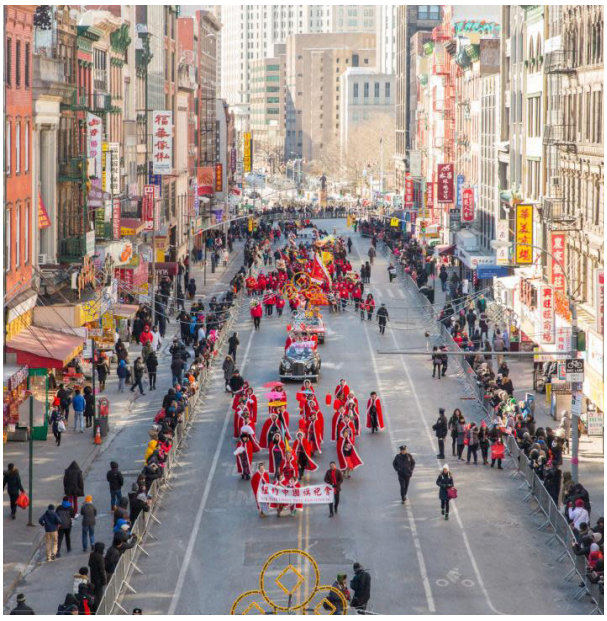
BENEFITS:

- Fosters a sense of belonging for the community and celebrates diversity
- Strengthens social networks within the larger community
- Investment in these events can also attract local/foreign tourists, boosts local economies, can generate job opportunities

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Select a venue that is convenient for people to travel by road as well as public transport.
- Particularly important to provide materials in multiple languages and have interpreters.
- Hire or partner with community based organizations rooted in the culture.

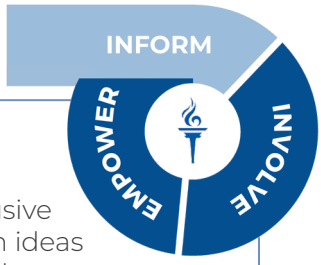




Left: 'Hip Hop in the Park' in Philadelphia showcasing the spirit of hip-hop culture through DJs, MCs, breakdancing and graffiti; Right: Lunar New Year Parade & Festival in Chinatown, NYC

DESIGN CHARETTES

Design Charettes are interactive group sessions for discussing and developing design options and receive community feedback to incorporate moving forward. They should start with an overview of the what, where, why, and how of the project and any key design principles. The bulk of the charrette followed by break-out sessions of multiple smaller groups to discuss the designs in greater detail. The community is given opportunities to sketch, draw, make notes, or even make their own designs, and then share their ideas to the entire group. Charrettes shed light on community perspective, overcome preconceived notions, and debate the trade-offs of various options. When done right, charrettes are inclusive and collaborative events that collect diverse feedback, uplift community voices, and create a clear path forward for a project.



BENEFITS:

- Creative, fun and inclusive way of talking through ideas and receiving feedback
- Community is given the tools to provide direct input for overall planning process
- Hosting a series of charrettes can build trust by showing how public input is actioned in the project

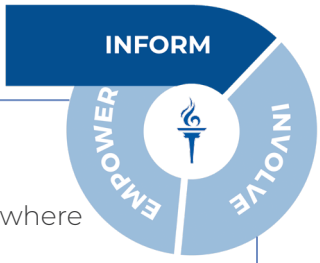
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Be open to criticism and denial for change
- Avoid overly technical designs and language
- Host the event at a convenient location as close to the project site as possible
- Listen to the community more than speaking at them





Left: A team presenting their discussion at the Seattle's Reimagining I-5 Charrette
Right: A 2016 charrette in Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, New Mexico



DROP-IN LOCATIONS / POP-UPS

Drop-in locations are information booths set up in public places to provide information to people for specific issues, topics, or projects. People are encouraged to stop by to ask any questions or address any concerns that they may have. Setting up within the community is a great way to cultivate transparency bringing the information to the people, making access to information as easy as possible. These locations can also be opportunities to communicate one-on-one with interested community members. They should be set up at public spaces or at existing events like farmers markets or festivals. Drop-in locations can also showcase upcoming projects, gather feedback, or just promote ongoing activity within the City. Interactive elements like post it boards, surveys, questionnaires, or educational games can attract even more participation.

BENEFITS:

- Meets the community where they are
- Allows for 1-on-1 conversations
- Low-cost but high-impact

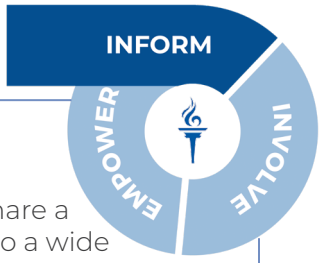
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Select a venue that is convenient for people to access by foot, transit, and car
- Incentives like food or merchandise can encourage more participation
- Provide inclusive, low-cost, and time efficient activities for more participation
- Advertise the location well beforehand so that people can plan in advance, and reach out to local organizations to coordinate with events or raise awareness



Image: St. Albert Municipal Development Plan Pop-Up Engagement

EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS



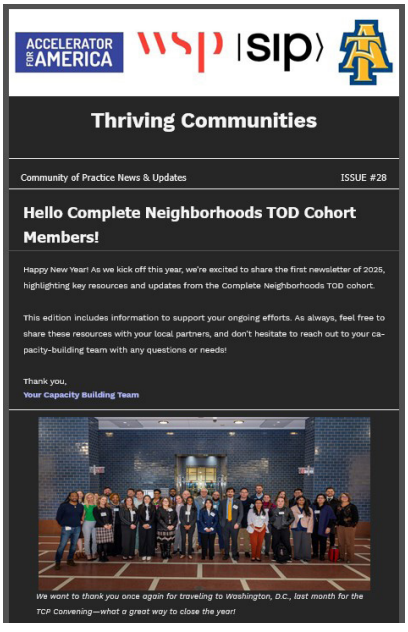
Email notifications are a low-cost and direct method of informing the public and stakeholders about upcoming engagement opportunities and provide project updates. Emails go directly to the public and allows agencies to share materials, resources, and information regularly. The content shared over email can mirror materials that were shared at in-person events, link to online interactive engagement tools, and generally allow for timely updates to a connected group. Regular emails with status updates help with transparency and make the public feel included in the process. While email notifications can be quick and comprehensive ways to inform the public, they shouldn't be the only communication method used. Email should be used in support of ongoing and regular in-person engagement opportunities.

BENEFITS:

- Low-cost method to share a variety of information to a wide audience
- Engagement can be measured, such as open rates or click through rates.
- Direct communication with the public and stakeholders
- Allows for personalization of content for different audiences

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Provide clear and directly relevant content
- Strike a balance between amount of information and frequency of messages
- Use as a supplemental tool rather than the primary communication tool


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Thriving Communities

Community of Practice News & Updates ISSUE #28

Hello Complete Neighborhoods TOD Cohort Members!

Happy New Year! As we kick off this year, we're excited to share the first newsletter of 2025, highlighting key resources and updates from the Complete Neighborhoods TOD cohort.

This edition includes information to support your ongoing efforts. As always, feel free to share these resources with your local partners, and don't hesitate to reach out to your capacity-building team with any questions or needs!

Thank you,
Your Capacity Building Team

We want to thank you once again for traveling to Washington, D.C., last month for the TCP Convening—what a great way to close the year!


Thriving Communities Network Newsletter

Resources to Use in the New Year

January 2025

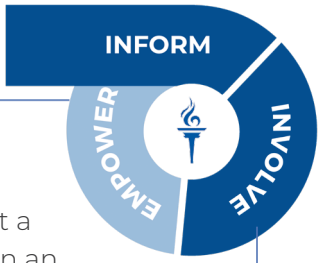
THRIVING COMMUNITIES NETWORK

As the TCN closed out 2024, our team wants to take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments last year. We also want to share some interagency resources we've created, to ensure our network of federal staff, capacity builders, and technical assistance providers are empowered to use them.

TCN was created because we are stronger together as a team of federal agencies and capacity builder programs. Interagency partnerships are essential to supporting place-based work that addresses communities' most pressing issues, and we look forward to strengthening this work in the year ahead.

Resources, Guides, and Our TCN Map

Left: biweekly newsletter shared to a targeted audience for the Thriving Communities Program
Right: USDOT Thriving Communities Newsletter with resources and additional program content



FAIRS

Fairs are usually held at large venues with various activities and information booths, drawing people from all ages and backgrounds into one place. They are held with the objective of raising awareness or providing information to the community. For example, various City departments could host an information fair to educate the community about their responsibilities and how their jobs work, or stakeholders could be invited to set up information booths or even performances to showcase their mission and ; all with the intention of informing the public about ongoing activities in engaging and creative ways. Fairs can also be held to celebrate successful projects, appreciate staff, and promote new ideas. Fairs can provide interactive opportunities that involve the public in decision making or share information about projects or resources.

BENEFITS:

- Opportunity to present a variety of information in an active and casual setting
- Builds community
- Opportunity to promote local businesses by having vendors on site

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Advertise the event well beforehand
- Coordinating the fair may be time-intensive
- Allow adequate time before the event to set up
- Sufficient staffing is needed

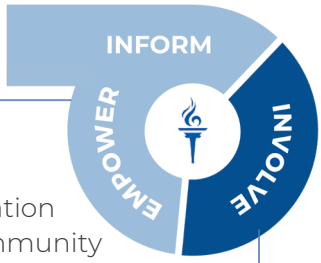




Left: A community resource fair hosted by the Elvehjem Neighborhood Association
Right: An interactive pop-up booth as part of the 'Imagine NYC' program hosted by Street Lab

FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

Focus group sessions are an effective strategy to understand the community - its issues, setbacks, and opportunities - in greater depth. These are generally held in small groups (8-15) to answer specific questions or to discuss specific concerns, especially when there is little to no information available. It is imperative that city officials develop a structured agenda or questionnaire beforehand so that conversations don't veer from the topic, and the group comes out with insightful results. A successful focus group session results in a clearer understanding of the community, their areas of concerns, and reasons behind their likes and dislikes. This understanding creates a strong foundation for the overall project and planning process.



BENEFITS:

- Builds a strong foundation of trust within the community
- Helps inform decisions equitably
- Collects diverse community feedback and popular thoughts/ opinions
- Empowers community in the decision making process

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Prepare specific questions depending on the concern and/or community
- Be sure to remain neutral and open-minded throughout the conversation
- Train staff on how to be respectful and equitable during the process
- Document meetings effectively

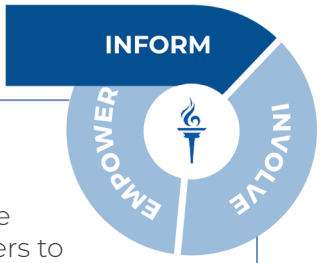




Left: Focus group engaging residents and business owners who are most personally affected by the issue at hand
Right: focus group discussing elements of the Downtown Strategic Investment Plan in Tulsa, OK

INFORMATION HOTLINES

Information hotlines are phone lines or chat lines that connect end users to representatives of a city or organization, who can help them with information or resolve any issues/ concerns. These are typically set up for larger, more controversial projects. In the case of phone-based hotlines, information can be provided in two ways: A) By connecting directly with staff members; or B) by providing pre-recorded project information. There can also be a provision to leave messages or questions for representatives to return to at a later time. Hotlines also provide direct access to information for members of the public without regular access to internet or who struggle with online engagement tools.



BENEFITS:

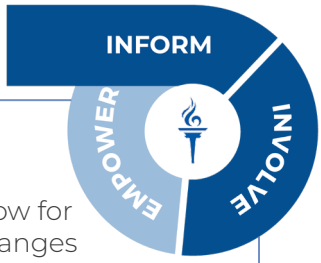
- Convenient and remote medium for stakeholders to gather information or raise concerns directly
- Creates transparency in project information and implementation
- Provides an offline link to information

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Anticipate frequently asked questions and prepare information beforehand
- Put up the phone number on all project flyers, posters, and social media sites
- Set up a toll-free number for non-local callers
- Prepare staff that has sufficient knowledge to be able to answer quickly and accurately



Image: QR code to access a communication channel / representative for a project



INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS / KIOSKS

Interactive Displays can be a tech-forward tool to install in high-traffic public spaces to provide real-time updates regarding projects, initiatives, and other information for the public. Electronic displays are multi-purpose, providing real time updates on train schedules, for example, or display interactive maps and figures for the public to review and engage with. The flexibility of a digital display also allows sharing dynamic information, such as survey links, survey responses, videos and other marketing information, and even provide an option to directly provide survey responses using the screen. An electric interactive display might be costly, and a more analogue kiosk staffed by project or policy staff can be just as effective. The above engagement opportunities can be had using a laptop, iPad, or printed maps and surveys for the public to use at the kiosk.

BENEFITS:

- Interactive displays allow for quick and dynamic changes to content in real time
- Displays and kiosks in public are more accessible
- Electric displays can show content in multiple languages at once
- Staffed kiosks bring staff and experts into the community as a resource, and offer similar interactivity

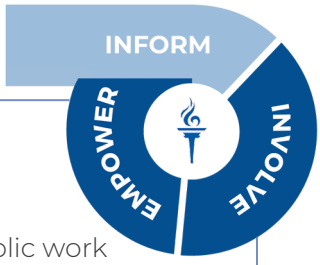
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Interactive displays are expensive and require monitoring and regular content updates
- Staffed kiosks require staff time and training to manage
- Initial set up of a display may take time





Left: IKE Smart City Digital Kiosk
Right: Staffed kiosk to engage the public about the Reimagine Middle Branch project



KIDS / YOUTH SKETCHING THEIR IDEAS

Involving youth in decision-making through creative mediums like sketching, coloring, and painting can enhance projects. Youth bring unique perspectives often overlooked by older generations. Providing opportunities to envision their neighborhoods creates a sense of ownership and connection. Their input helps uncover gaps in our communities. Most public engagement meetings are not structured to attract younger generations. An inclusive process like sketching will incentivize youth and their families to participate. For successful youth engagement, project sponsors must proactively seek their input and make it approachable. This approach not only engages youth but also fosters a sense of community involvement.

BENEFITS:

- Encourage youth to be more attuned with public work and their local government
- Brings fresh perspectives to the table
- Energetic youth can inspire the rest of the community as well
- Can help build more active, dynamic, and youth-friendly cities

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

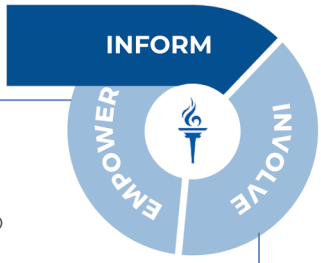
- Be prepared with all material and stationary required
- Develop sketching prompts beforehand so there is no confusion
- For people who are not accustomed to drawing or coloring, make provisions like stencils, stickers, or post its.





Left: Youth leaving their thoughts on a canvas board, source: project for public spaces
Right: local Girl Scout troop creating collages of their dream neighborhoods

MAILERS / FLIERS



Sending physical mail or fliers to community members with summaries of city initiatives that explain the what, why, who, where, and how of a project can be a simple and direct means of getting the word out about projects directly to residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. These physical notices present an opportunity to communicate directly with the public while also allowing for targeted messaging. While it can be easier to send the same content as a PDF over email, sending a physical card can help project messaging standout and encourage folks to participate: it is much harder to ignore a physical notice than a digital notice. While mailers are a direct tool to inform the public about goings-ons, they can and should serve as a call-to-action that provides additional information for what additional opportunities there are for future and further involvement.

BENEFITS:

- Low-cost and direct to the public
- Can be Personalized for different audiences and more easily translated
- Serves as an informative tool and a call-to-action for recipients to get involved in the process.

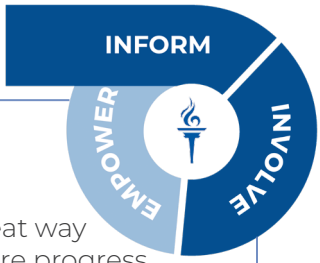
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Clear and visually appealing designs are important to stand out amongst received mail
- Tailor the messaging as much as possible so they feel personal and relevant
- Include relevant information in a community-friendly language





Left: Community engagement flier for a project in City of Airway Heights, CA
Right: Project staff handing out fliers on the train



NEWS STORIES / INTERVIEWS

A news story is a written or recorded narrative shared with the public to inform them of ongoing happenings, recent events, or project updates. They typically answer important questions of what, why, where, and how. Regularly published articles keep people aware, interested and informed. News articles can be published through hard copies like newspapers and magazines; or digitally hosted on online news/ journalism websites. Information can also be shared through interviews, which are open dialogues where a host or writer prepares a list of questions to ask an invited guest. This guest may be a community member, stakeholder or a subject matter expert. Interviews feel more authentic as they are taken place face-to-face and conversational in nature. They are a helpful technique to gain different kinds of perspective on a topic and discuss insights.

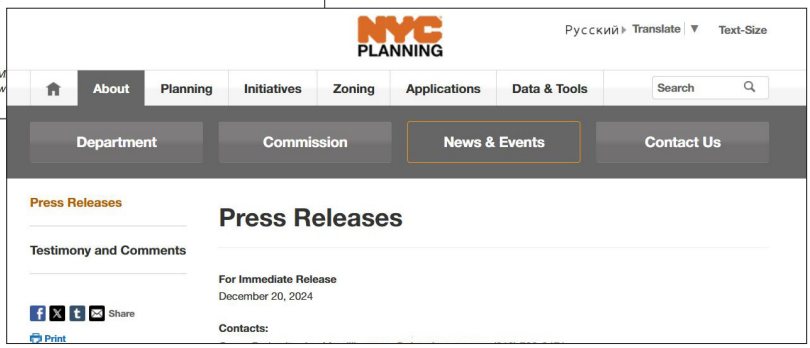
BENEFITS:

- News stories are a great way to document and share progress directly with community and stakeholders
- Progress and events can be accessed easily and tracked over time
- Interviews are primary sources of information, hence can be trusted more

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

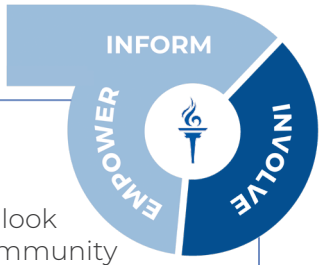
- Always fact-check before publicizing information
- Prepare questions and conversation starters before hand
- Make sure the moderator is netural





Left: News Article on the official website of the City of New York
Right: 'News & Events' section on the NYC Planning website with regular press releases and updates

PHOTO AND VIDEO CONTESTS



This strategy encourages people across all ages to submit a photograph or video, usually based on a specific topic or prompt given to them. This is a creative way to creatively crowd-source information from a diverse range of people through their lens and provide them the opportunity to tell their stories, voice issues, and provide an inside view of their daily lives. Photographs/ videos can be an entertaining medium of expression to convey needs, hopes, and visions – and have the potential to expand reach to a wider audience compared to conventional engagement methods. Many a times, artistic expressions convey impactful messages that words may sometimes fail to – especially for people who do not feel confident enough to speak up in community meetings, or for those whose first language is not English.

BENEFITS:

- Planners gain a closer look into the lives of the community
- Reaches a wide audience, especially with incentives with prizes or cash rewards
- Inspires people to care and play an active role in planning processes

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Think strategically about a subject or prompt that will be easy to follow but also encourage maximum participation
- Consider arranging cash prizes, gifts or publication opportunities for winners
- Leave ample amount of time for people to register and/or participate

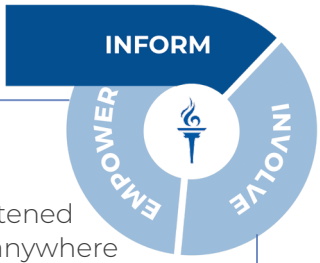




Left: A photo contest named "Imagine a Day Without Water" organized by the Houston Public Works to spread awareness on the importance of water conservation
Right: Flyer for a logo design competition for New York City Privatelty Owned Public Spaces

PODCASTING

Podcasts are publicly accessible digital audio or video files typically available in a series of episodes available to download or stream online. They are like talk shows, with each episode being anywhere between 20 to 50 minutes and run by one or multiple hosts following a specific agenda or theme. Podcasts are a great way to have open dialogues about a topic and ask specific questions tailored to the interests of the target audience. Many a times, the host(s) invite guest speakers to dive deeper into a topic and help listeners gain better insights. These guest speakers are generally stakeholders, industry experts or well-known figures. Podcasts tend to feel more personal to listeners as they are recorded in smaller rooms with no audience and are consumed directly by the listener.



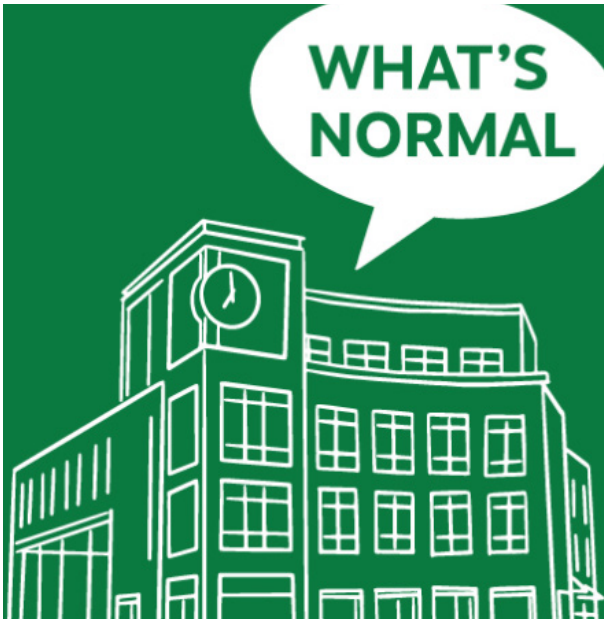
BENEFITS:

- Flexible and can be listened to anytime and from anywhere
- Podcasts feel like personal conversations to listeners
- Building a series of episodes can expand reach and awareness over time

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Prepare questions and conversation starters beforehand
- Make sure the content of these conversations are well-researched
- Be prepared with recording gear and run technical checks beforehand
- Make conversations less formal

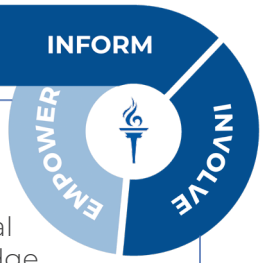




Left: Podcast covering stories of the people, places and plans in San Juan County, Utah
Right: Podcast featuring Town of Normal, Illinois department heads, staff, and community partners giving a behind-the-scenes look at Town functions

PRESENTATIONS (REFLECTING PREVIOUS INPUT)

Presentations are talks prepared with information to be conveyed to an audience, typically aided by graphically informative boards or digital slides. They are important in the community engagement process as a way of setting context and providing necessary background, data, and analyses before seeking input from the community. In cases of follow-up presentations, it is important to open with a recap of what was spoken about in previous meetings (if any), explicitly addressing input or questions raised by the audience. This gives the impression that people's input is being valued and taken into consideration for any project or planning decision being made. Moreover, It is important to establish common ground, so that everyone is on the same page and the intent of the engagement process is not lost.



BENEFITS:

- Graphically appealing visual aids can help with knowledge retention
- Creates a platform to set context and discuss next steps
- Opportunity for community to raise questions or concerns

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

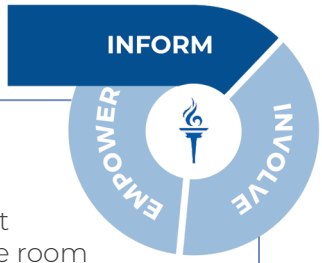
- Prepare, test, and set up all equipment required for the presentation beforehand
- Send an agenda of the presentation to the attendees beforehand so that they come prepared with questions
- Provide ample time for Q&A after the presentation



Image: Presentation conducted before a community workshop for the RiverCOG TOD Vision Plan public workshop,

PROJECT BRIEFINGS

Project Briefings are short and high-level summaries of a project, outlining important aspects like scope, timeline, goals, objectives etc. and highlighting some key takeaways and considerations. The main purpose of project briefings is not only to set a frame of reference, but also to align all stakeholders with the objectives so that they are able to participate effectively and with a better understanding of the project. Some key topics covered under project briefings include but are not limited to – Project Goals and Objectives, Scope, Activities and Timeline, Potential Impacts and Mitigation Strategies, Budget, and Next Steps. Project briefings are generally short and to the point, presented in a concise and organized format such as a single slide deck or sheet of document. These may also include visuals as per relevance.



BENEFITS:

- Short and to-the-point descriptions leave little room for confusion
- A well-structured brief streamlines conversation and creates better focus within the group
- By clearly defining goals and objectives, it becomes easy to measure and convey success in the future

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

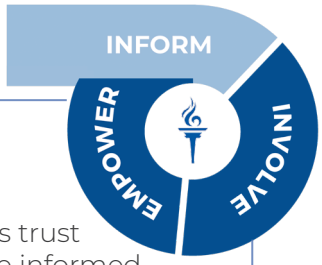
- Share a digital and physical copy of the brief with the team and community members
- Structure the project overview keeping in mind the target audience and stakeholders



Image: Project introduction and brief to the community as part of the Thriving Communities Program in Broward County, Florida

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION MADE PUBLIC

Every project consists of information and documents related to it (such as drawings, images, info graphics, etc.) that evolve throughout the project lifecycle. It is important to make relevant information accessible to keep community members up-to-date and informed; and also, to create opportunities for them to provide input. Information transparency is good practice in community engagement as it builds trust and instills a sense of accountability and involvement. Moreover, creating a central repository of data and documentation like a website, where information is regularly updated allows community members to be self-sufficient and know where to look or reach out for questions.

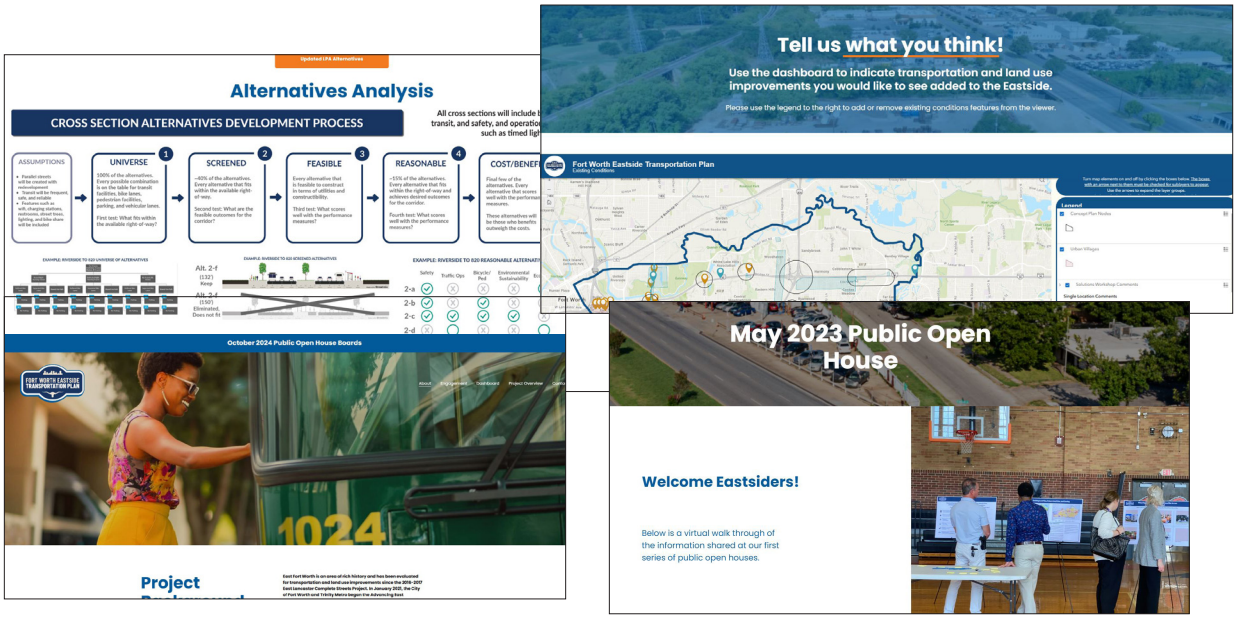


BENEFITS:

- Transparency cultivates trust and helps people make informed decisions
- Keeping people informed instills accountability and involvement
- Transparency also keeps government bodies and organizations in check and reduces potential bias

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

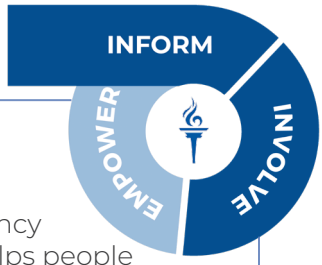
- Be mindful of the documentation shared, as sometimes too much information can be overwhelming
- Regularly inform the community of information updates if shared on a project/ organization website



Image(s): Screen grabs of project information shared on the East Fort Worth Transportation Plan website

PROJECT WEBSITE / UPDATES

Project websites are useful as a platform for planners/ organizations to share general information, documentation and progress on a project. They are also helpful for advertising upcoming events or community meetings to keep people informed and allow them the time to plan beforehand. It is important to regularly update the website and make sure no important update is lost along the way. Project websites can be used for various purposes other than information sharing - like for collaboration with stakeholders, engagement with the community via survey forms, feedback sections, FAQ sections, or potentially a chat bot/ hot line that can connect them to a project representative. Having a location with all resources in one place equips community to be self-reliant and confident about planning processes.



BENEFITS:

- Information transparency cultivates trust and helps people make informed decisions
- Keeping people informed instills accountability and involvement
- Transparency also keeps planners in check and regulates potential bias

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Design the website to be ADA accessible and graphically easy to navigate
- Be mindful of the documentation shared, as sometimes too much information can be overwhelming
- Regularly inform the community of information updates

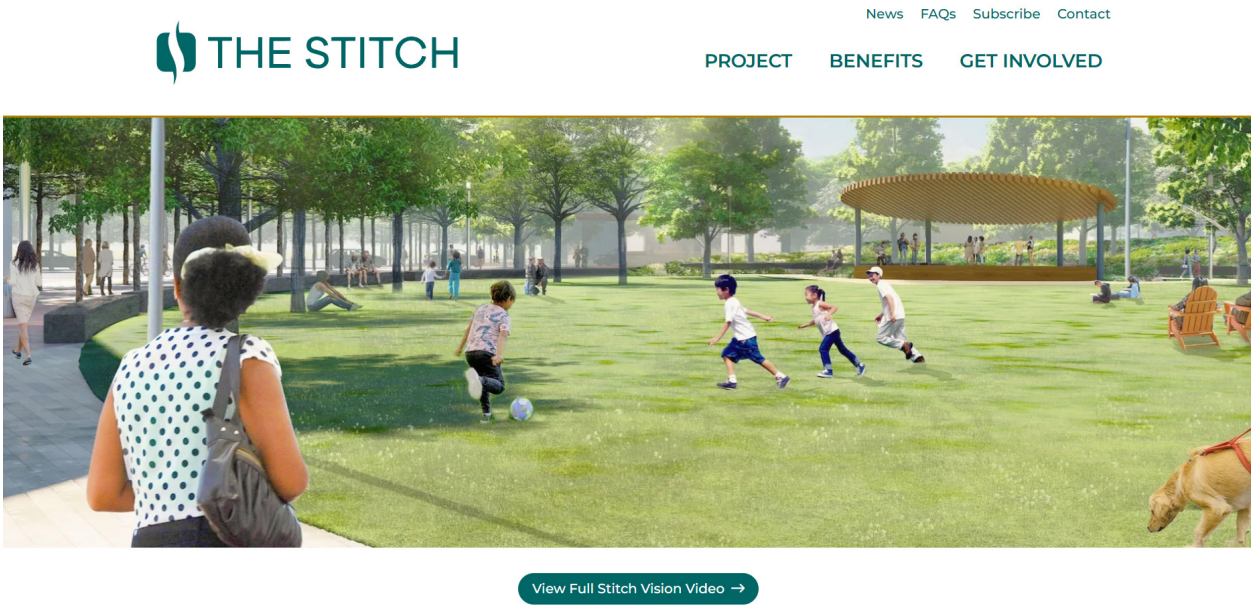
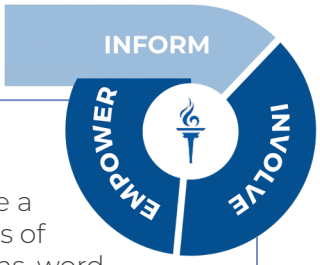


Image: Homepage of the project website of The Stitch, a civic infrastructure project intended to reconnect Downtown and Midtown Atlanta

PUBLIC SURVEYS



A survey is typically a list of multiple or single choice questions written on digital/ physical forms or asked verbally in meetings, door-to-door inquiries, etc. These questions are intended to extract information about a particular group or community, gather public opinion, or collect feedback. Surveys can also be helpful in places with a lack of readily available data. Surveys collect information in a very uniform manner, where each person answers the same set of questions. If conducted during a project, they can be taken in the beginning to gain an understanding of the context, needs, and opportunities; or in later project phases for community feedback. Surveys are helpful to gain a quick understanding of a specific group of people without having to spend the time and resources in conducting formal workshops or meetings.

BENEFITS:

- Digital surveys can give a quick snapshot analysis of answers through graphs, word clouds, etc.
- Surveys capture personal details and opinions that can better understand the community

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Be sure to ask for consent before taking the survey
- Ask clear and unbiased questions
- Design the digital or phyical form to be ADA accessible and graphically easy to navigate
- Keep them concise and engaging
- In cases of verbal surveys, have a translator ready if necessary
- Have translated versions of the form

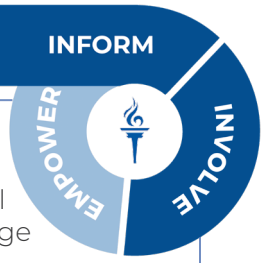




Images (R and L): Planning Department of San Francisco worked with Gehl to conduct a Public Space & Public Life Study of Civic Center by asking public to fill survey forms

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

A public presentation is a speech given to an audience, typically with visual aids like a deck of slides or physical boards - with the sole purpose being to share information, project goals, scopes, or any other useful information. These are great ways to engage with communities, especially in the initial stages of a project and at the start of a workshop. Presentations organized at regular intervals keep the public informed and interested, and help the working group gain helpful feedback during the development of the project. Typically, public presentations start off with a brief introduction of the presenter and if time permits, the audience too. The presentations themselves are structured in a way that is kicked off with an overview/ agenda, followed by relevant information, after which the floor is opened to the public for questions and comments.



BENEFITS:

- Graphically appealing visual aids can help with knowledge retention
- Presents a platform to set context and talk about project goals and vision
- Opportunity for community to ask questions and for both parties to arrive at a common ground

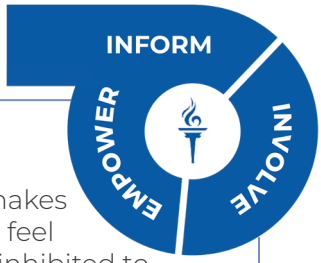
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Prepare, test, and set up all equipment required for the presentation beforehand
- Send an agenda of the presentation to the attendees beforehand so that they can come prepared with questions
- Provide ample time for Q&A
- Select a venue that is convenient for people to access by foot, transit, and car



Image: Public Presentation before a workshop for the Indian Creek TOD Master Plan Project in Atlanta, GA

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS



Public Workshops are hands-on meetings designed for people to discuss ideas, learn, and/or solve problems. They are open to all and generally include interactive activities like design charrettes, community feedback sessions, SWOT analyses etc. Typically, a workshop kicks off with a brief overview presentation about the project and any other relevant data for the people to know beforehand. After that, community members get a chance to interact with planners and with each other, share their opinions directly or through break out groups, and engage in the activities planned for them. Workshops can also be educational in nature, conducted to train people in a specific practical skill or technique. Workshops can be held in person or virtually, and can be conducted anytime in the planning process.

BENEFITS:

- Hands-on approach makes community members feel more involved and uninhibited to share ideas
- Workshops can help build strong connections and network within the community
- They are a great way to interact directly with planners and/or government authorities
- They are great avenues to inform the public and train them in a specific skill or issue

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Plan agenda of the workshop beforehand
- Be prepared with answers to frequently asked questions

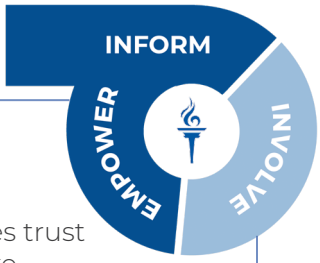




Left: Public Workshop for the Indian Creek TOD Master Plan project at Atlanta, GA;
Right: Public Workshop for the Thriving Communities Program at Broward County, FL

SHARING OUT PUBLIC SURVEY INPUT

Sharing results of a public survey can be beneficial for people to understand their own communities better, since surveys capture very subjective views and opinions. Being transparent about the questions and answers from a survey can also help people be more understanding and supportive of decisions made by planners. It can also be helpful to share analytical insights and takeaways based on the survey answers through visual infographics like graphs, photos in figures, or charts to nudge people to think about a subject in a certain way.



BENEFITS:

- Transparency cultivates trust and helps people make informed decisions
- Keeping people informed instills accountability and involvement
- Transparency also keeps government bodies and organizations in check

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Be mindful of the amount of information shared, as sometimes too much of it can be overwhelming

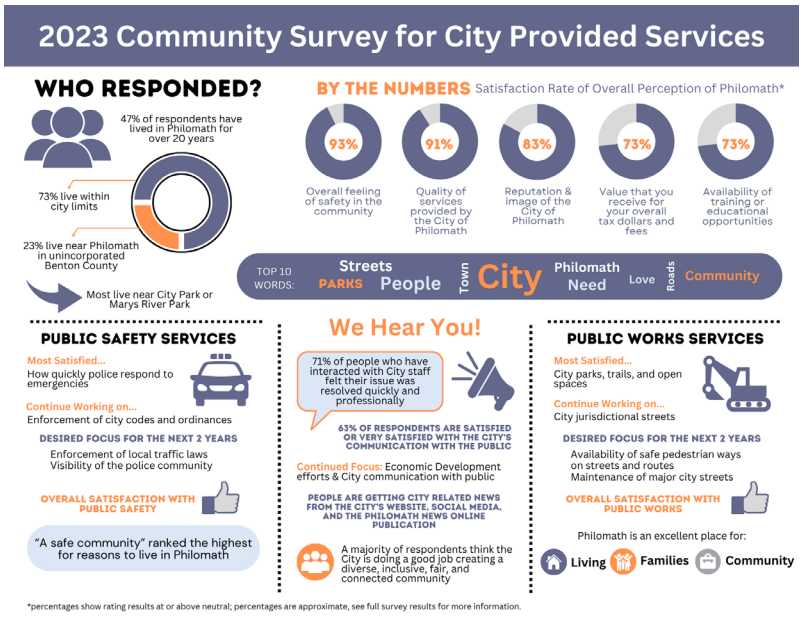
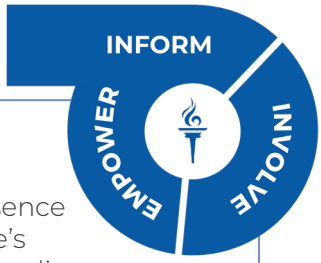


Image: Results of a survey conducted regularly in the City of Philomath, Oregon to gather public sentiment about community livability and services provided by local government

SOCIAL MEDIA (HASHTAGS)

In the context of social media, a hashtag is essentially a pound sign (#) followed by any kind of word, sentence, project name, etc. used to categorize content relating to that word. With an increasing rise in social media apps, hashtags help organize content related to a topic across these apps and amongst a plethora of information to make it easily discoverable. Hashtags also act as a catchphrases to help grain traction and popularity. They are a great way to instill a sense of community and belonging as more and more people use them when sharing viewpoints, opinions and stories. In the case of public engagement, hashtags can be a great way to start a conversation and create an online presence, so that anybody who wants to learn about the project can simply look up the hashtag and find an archive of photos and videos related to it.

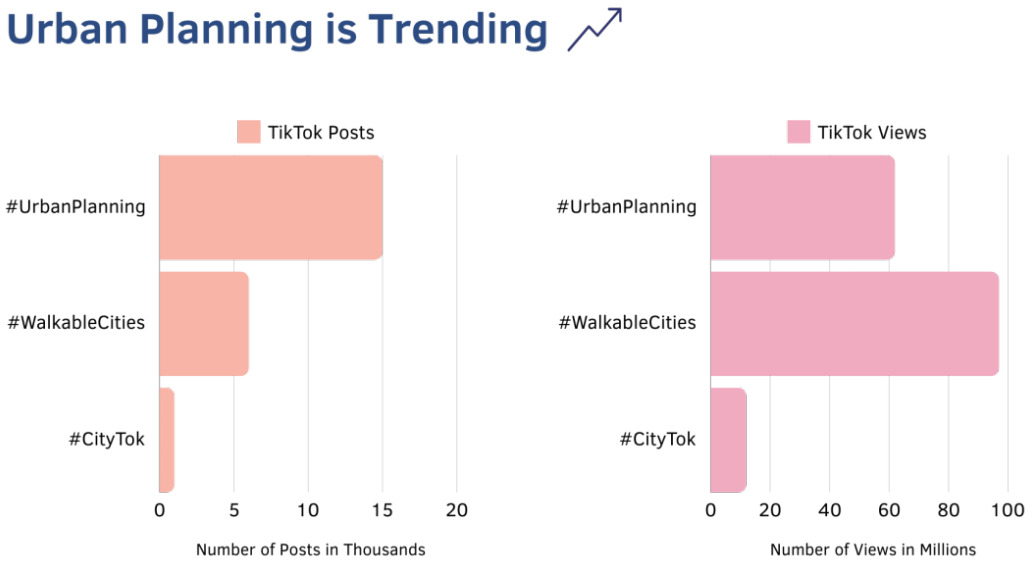


BENEFITS:

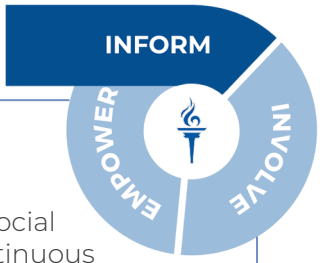
- Creates an online presence across multiple people's accounts and social media apps thats measurable
- Helps gain popularity amongst the youth
- Great way to keep community active and engaged even without the existence of traditional engagement activities

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Be wary of spreading misinformation and be devoid of any bias before engaging with social media apps
- Keep hashtags short, concise, and easy to understand
- Make sure the hashtag has not been used before



Images: Urban Planning hashtag trends on TikTok



SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

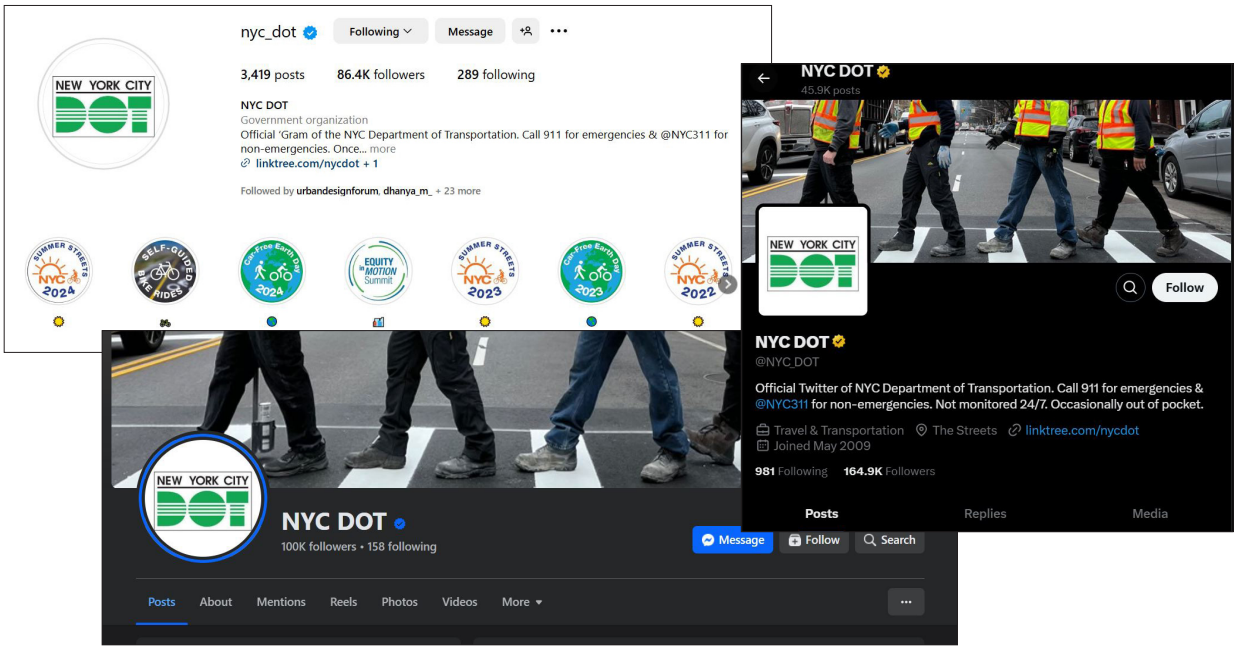
In the past few decades, social media has become the most popular platform for engagement not only amongst the youth, but also among the older population. These platforms are primarily used for entertainment through visually captivating photographs, graphics, and short video clips; but also, increasingly being used as a source of information. Due to its fast and highly accessible nature, information posted online can be rapidly shared and made popular within a matter of hours or minutes, using strategies that orchestrate the algorithm and reach the right set of people. With this increase in popularity and accessibility, creating a social media presence on sites like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. has become the norm, as they are great avenues to regularly post content and interact with people for continuous involvement.

BENEFITS:

- Regular activity on a social media site fosters continuous engagement
- Quick and accessible medium of sharing information

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

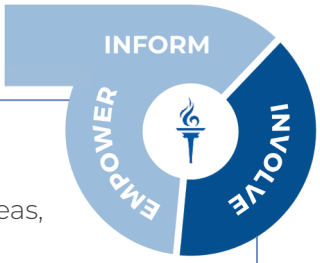
- Be wary of spreading misinformation and be devoid of any bias before engaging with social media apps
- Create content on a regular basis to keep people engaged and attract more subscribers/ followers



Image(s): Screen captures of various social media accounts of the NYC Department of Transportation; Clockwise: Instagram, X, and Facebook

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews are one-on-one conversations with people who have vested interest or an important role to play as community members, contributors, or investors in an area or project. Since they are key players of the community, these conversations are important to gain useful insights and suggestions. Ideally, they should be taken place at the beginning of a project to avoid missing any important information before the project kicks off, but it is also important to conduct them on a regular basis to build trust, share progress, and gather feedback and suggestions at every step.



BENEFITS:

- Helps identify new ideas, issues and concerns
- Ideas or suggestions from stakeholders
- Helps in development of scope, goals, and agendas
- Keeps project on track and keeps planners accountable

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Make sure to inform or ask for permission if the interviews are to be recorded
- Prepare questions and structure of conversation well in advance
- More active listening, less talking

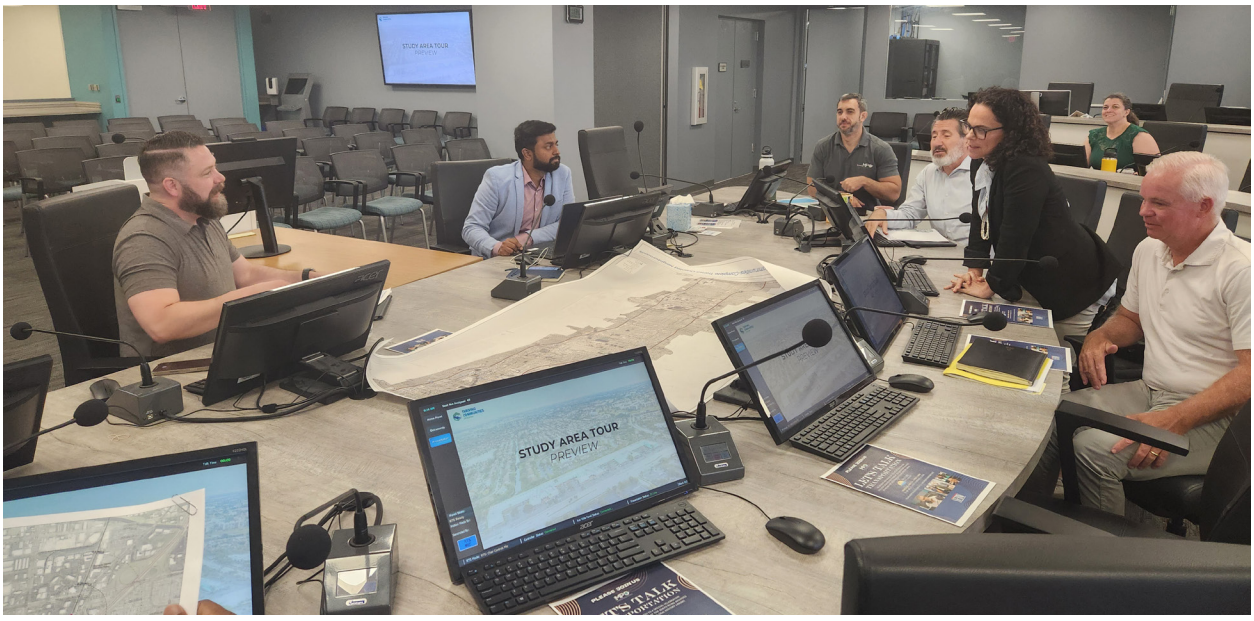
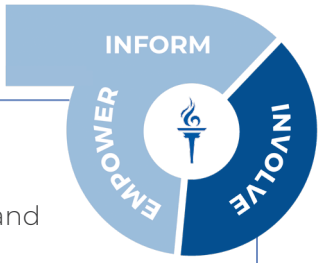


Image: Stakeholder Meeting to kick off the Thriving Communities Program at Broward County, Florida

STEERING COMMITTEES

A steering committee is a group of people who guide a project based on their expertise and interest in the subject or community. These committee members can be internal or external advisors assisting and making sure the project stays on course and is successful. Members of a steering committee are chosen based on the community they represent, their expertise in a subject matter, and/or specific project requirements. Typically, these members are not involved in the day-to-day activities but assist in high-level matters/concerns like budgeting, timelines, risk management, quality control, etc.



BENEFITS:

- Better project quality and monitoring
- Diverse expertise
- Better and more informed decision making
- Identification of project scope, goals and objectives

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

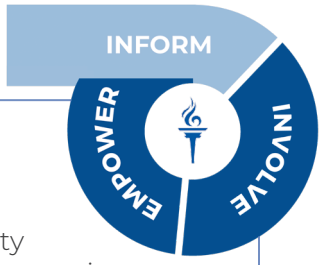
- Make sure the committee represents a diverse range of expertise and identities
- Select individuals who can provide clear direction and feedback
- Clearly define scope and purpose of the committee



Image: Steering Committee members working in small groups to provide key opportunities and challenges for a Park Facilities Master Plan in Wake County, NC

STORYTELLING SESSIONS

Storytelling sessions are conducted for community members to share snippets of their lives; neighborhoods, significant places, or issues that they face on a day-to-day basis. These can be conveyed through essays, photographs, art, or any other medium of expression. These meetings allow planners and authorities to gain a deeper understanding of the communities and be more empathetic of their perspectives. Storytelling places community members in the front seat and provides them the opportunity to share their vision for the community. These memories or viewpoints can provide important context and be used as reference points in the future.



BENEFITS:

- Platform for community members to own their narratives
- Builds trust that the planners/ organizers are interested in people's perspectives

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

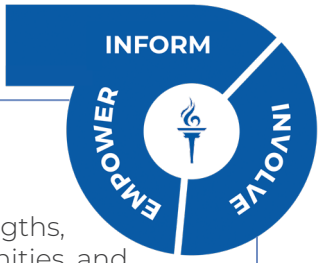
- Arrange for equipment like cameras or recorders to capture these stories
- Pens and paper at tables for recording key notes



Image: Video storytelling through Fairpicture in Abekoase, Ghana

SWOT ACTIVITIES

'S.W.O.T' is short for 'Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats'. A SWOT activity is a strategic analysis tool that helps in identifying shortcomings and opportunities in a given place or project, by thinking about each of the four components in relation to the place in question. This activity can be carried out in a workshop format, where organizers first deliver a brief presentation to set context and map out the agenda for the meeting. Then, either digitally or physically, a visual board can be set up with four quadrants for the four components. Each quadrant is meant for participants to post their thoughts under – this can be done using post-it notes, verbally, or directly using a pen/marker if they are made on a physical board.

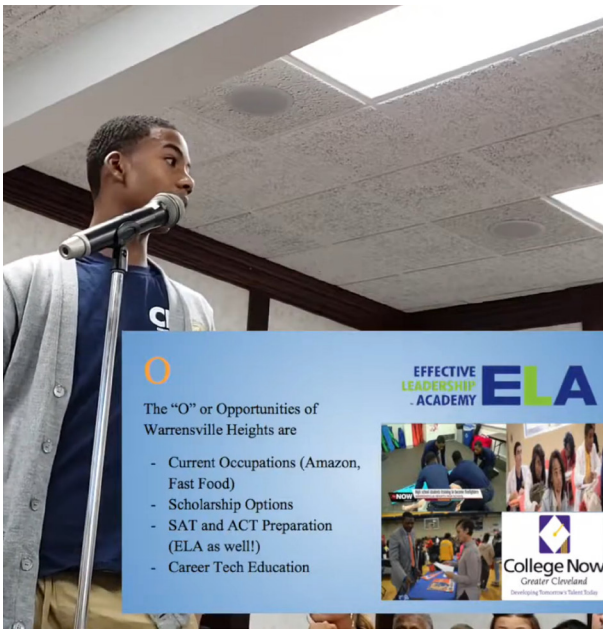


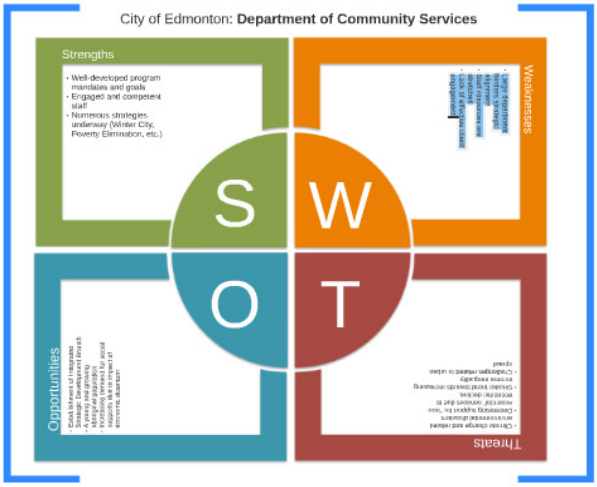
BENEFITS:

- Clearly identifies Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Involving the community builds trust and connections
- Hands-on activity that encourages more participation

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Clearly state scope and objectives of the exercise before beginning
- Conduct a quick overview presentation to establish context and align perspectives





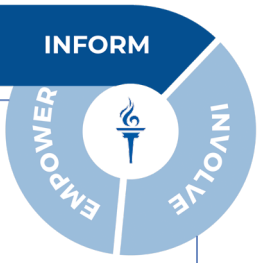
Left: SWOT Analysis presentation at a town hall by local youth
Right: SWOT Analysis diagram

TEXT CAMPAIGN

A text campaigns is a kind of marketing strategy where automated text messages are sent to a group of people on their phones to convey promotional or informational messages. This is a useful way to directly communicate with community members about general information, events, project updates, or to seek feedback. Since almost everybody uses a simple mobile phone these days, text campaigning is a relatively straightforward and accessible means to engage as it allows organizations to reach people on-the-go and within seconds, reaching a larger number than many traditional methods of engagement. It is important to be aware of that text messages can potentially leave out certain groups like younger children and older people who may not know how to operate a phone, hence it is vital to also think about alternative modes of communication simultaneously.



Image: Provision by the Town of Rye, Westchester County, New York for community members to subscribe to text notifications



BENEFITS:

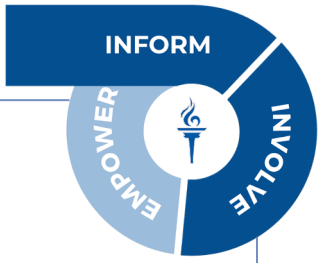
- Provides a direct line of communication with each community member
- Cost effective compared to traditional methods
- Messages are quicker, more accessible and flexible in nature

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Seek people's consent to subscribe to receiving messages
- Use concise and personalized language
- Avoid inundating people with too many messages
- Consider using a toll-free phone number so people outside of the city, state, or country can receive and send messages without a charge

TOWN HALLS

Town halls are public meetings organized by government bodies or private organizations to bring people together and convey information, hear from them, or discuss something specific. Despite the name, town halls need not necessarily take place in a Town Hall and can be held in a range of venues like schools, municipal buildings, office buildings, universities, and so on. They can also be hosted online. Town halls are a great way to meet with community members face to face and foster connections between government bodies/organizations and the people.



BENEFITS:

- Builds trust within community
- In-person town halls are beneficial to connect with community members

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

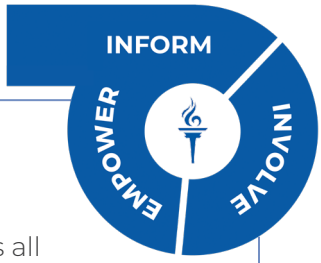
- Plan agenda of the meeting before hand
- Select a venue that is convenient for people to access by foot, transit, and car
- Prepare to answer some of the commonly asked questions
- Be open to listening to concerns and opinions without bias



Image: Town Hall discussion hosted by the Washington County of Utah

TRAINING / EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Training or educational activities are strategies to bring people together and indulge them in activities that will impart knowledge regarding a specific topic or a project. These are planned in a manner that can involve people across ages and backgrounds and encourage collaborative learning. These trainings can also be helpful in equipping a community will skills and empowering them in the long run. Educational activities are designed to be engaging and fun, and can take place in a variety of settings, like a discussion-based setting, classroom instructional setting, workshop setting, etc. They can be crash-courses that can be completed within one day, or a series of classes spanning across a number of days/months.



BENEFITS:

- Involves people across all ages and backgrounds
- Fun, creative, and collaborative ways of engagement

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

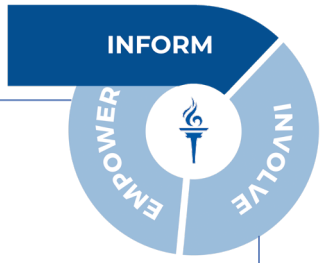
- Select a venue that is convenient for people to access by foot, transit, and car
- Consider having translators on site if needed



Image: New York City Employment and Training Coalition offering training in computer programming and wireless network management in collaboration with Stacks and Joules, a nonprofit project-based learning program

UP-FRONT INFORMATION (AHEAD OF ACTIVITIES)

Up-front information is publicly informed details, disclaimers, or rules disclosed at the beginning of any activity or event with a clear intention of being direct and candid. This allows participants and community members to make informed decisions and contribute as effectively as possible. A lack of accurate and clear upfront information may impact processes and raise concern or confusion amongst community members.



BENEFITS:

- Explicit and upfront information clears confusion and inhibitions
- Establishes common ground

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

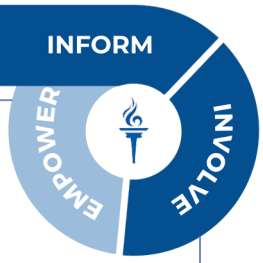
- Make sure information is concise and easy to understand
- Consider translating services if necessary



Image: Project representative kicking off a meeting

VIRTUAL REALITY TOOLS / APPLICATIONS

Virtual Reality tools or applications are hardware devices with software/ computer generated environments created to simulate real-time situations. These devices fabricate immersive experiences for users to interact with directly, and as a result gain a better and more sensory understanding of a project or place by feeling like they are close physical proximity of it, without actually having to build anything in real life. These simulations are typically 3-dimensional images or models that can be designed as walk-throughs or models that can be viewed on laptops / phones.



BENEFITS:

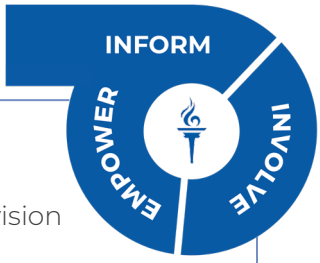
- Virtual simulations can be tailored in whatever way needed through software algorithms
- Brings community members closer to the actual experience of a project or place
- More engaging way to communicate with people of different linguistic backgrounds and/or disabilities

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Conduct these experiences in controlled and safe environments



Image: Outreach for the Downtown 11th Street Bikeway study in Boise, ID, included 3D VR images to help the public visualize proposed improvements



VISIONING SESSIONS

Visioning sessions for community engagement are collaborative meetings designed to help a group articulate a shared vision for the future. These sessions are often led by skilled facilitators who guide participants through structured activities such as brainstorming, storytelling, and interactive discussions. The goal is to create an inclusive environment where all voices, including those from underrepresented groups, are encouraged to contribute their aspirations, concerns, and ideas. Participants work together to identify common goals, values, and priorities, often using visual aids like charts or maps to organize thoughts and build consensus. These sessions are particularly useful for communities or organizations seeking input to inform strategic planning, policy development, or new initiatives. By fostering open dialogue and collaboration, visioning sessions help build trust, create a sense of ownership, and inspire collective action, ensuring that the outcomes reflect the shared values and hopes of the group.

BENEFITS:

- Supports a collective vision for moving forward
- Provides space for all participants and voices
- Helps build trust with participants if done correctly
- Can be easy to pivot on topics to accommodate input

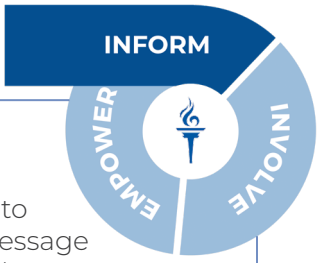
THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Should be collaborative and interactive for participants.
- Should be clear on how input will be used.
- Need a good facilitator and clear purpose of session to be effective



Image: Example visioning session with community members to identify future opportunities for National Park

YARD SIGNS



Yard signs are a powerful tool for community engagement, offering a visible, cost-effective way to share messages and foster connections. Placed in front yards, parks, or common areas, they create awareness and share information on local issues, events, or causes. Their vibrant designs and concise messaging capture attention, while their strategic placement ensures visibility to passersby. Yard signs can promote neighborhood initiatives, support community campaigns, or celebrate achievements, such as school pride or local milestones. They can be developed for individual events, recurring events, and include QR codes for passersby to scan and get more information. Easy to customize and distribute, yard signs amplify community voices, reflect shared values, and strengthen local identity.

BENEFITS:

- Simple, impactful way to directly spread your message at the community level
- Cost-effective and easy to distribute to amplify community voices
- Showcase shared values or calls to action, strengthening community bonds and inspiring grassroots participation

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Adhere to local laws and regulations for placement, language, timeframe, size, etc.
- Clear messaging is important. Font size should be legible for passersby.
- Position signs in high-visible locations
- Consider signs that are eco-friendly and can be reused – sign and stake materials



Image: Example yard sign in Portland OR that supports awareness for their vision zero and street safety campaign

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Notes:

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