

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING THROUGH THE ARTS:

What it Means to Have a Place at the Table



DEFINITIONS OF PARTNER GROUPS

ARTS PARTNER: The organization that liaises with artists and conceives artistic engagement projects with artists.

PLANNING STAFF: The municipal staff charged with managing the planning process.

STEERING COMMITTEE: Community representatives from various sectors with investment in study area: business owners, residents, small arts organizations, regional planning representatives, and other City departments, ie, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Community and Economic Development.

CONSULTANTS The outside planning team with expertise in planning and design.

CHECKLIST

1. Spend 30 years advocating for incorporating the arts into planning in public and private development. (Who does it: Arts partner and arts community)
2. Establish partnership for the planning process; develop a budget and seek funding sources. (Who does it: Planning staff and Arts partner)
3. Assess artist population, train artists in engagement strategies. (Who does it: Arts partner)
4. Educate the public on what planning is. Explain steps and goals for specific project. This should be the first thing that happens with the public. (Who does it: Planning staff)
5. Develop a schedule among partner group for project from rollout to plan delivery. (Who does it: All partners and steering committee)
6. Establish documentation plan. Ideally should be multi-media. (Who does it: Planning staff and Arts partner)
7. Develop web platform to share community feedback and project activities, ideally include interactive features. (Who does it: Planning staff, Arts Partner, IT consultants)
8. Crash course in planning. To make this a really successful process, Arts partners must dedicate themselves to understanding planning, the project, and the community. This is a challenge. (Who does it: Arts partner)
9. Collaborate with artists proficient in arts engagement strategies to develop projects that engage constituencies: business owners, residents, low-income communities, immigrants and new Americans, etc. Proficiency in arts engagement means artists understand that their processes must be collaborative with various demographics, that the outcomes providing a vehicle for public input that results in a work of art. Understand that in engagement work, the excellence of the process takes precedence over the outcome. (Who does it: Arts partner)

10. Simultaneously request proposals from the artist community to broaden possibilities and disciplines that add to unique, grassroots experiences for community. (Who does it: Arts partner)
11. Continually communicate art projects in process and new planning project information with the community via newsletters and direct communication to consultants and steering committee, work on PR opportunities with press contacts. (Who does it: Planning staff and Arts partner)
12. Draft plan. (Who does it: Consultants)
13. Review draft. Make sure it is a creative and engaging document, not a binder with words. (Who does it: All partners and steering committee)
14. Enter shorter, second phase of community feedback on plan. (Who does it: All partners)
15. Incorporate feedback, publish, and distribute widely.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

Try to be realistic about what outcomes you can actually drive in order to be most effective. The municipal planning process is not in perfect alignment with creative timelines all the time. Everyone must compromise.

Timelines and implementation need to remain general and flexible. Dependence on outside consultants, other organizations, and feedback from community inevitably shifts the project outline.

The experience of planning is not formulaic; it will vary with every community and partners.

The first half of the project will be experimental and responsive. The second half must be corrective to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice.

The project will take way more time than you budgeted.

IDEA TOOLBOX

An event or outreach tool that is fun for the public as a way to collect information about what people love and would like to see change. The goal is to tease out major themes.

Curate/commission artists in collaborative process to explore missing issues or demographics. The goal is to strengthen the relationship between artists' strengths and community education and interpretation.

Connect artists to information and resources behind the scenes; ie, facilitate dialogue between artist, storm water engineer, and science museum educator, facilitate long-term community education resource with science museum.

Documentation of artist project examples:

<https://vimeo.com/120072663>

<https://vimeo.com/116670481>