

Re-Imagining Participation

An Innovative Engagement Compendium for Affordable Housing Development



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PREFACE

Atira Women's Resource Society (Atira) has proposed an 87-unit affordable rental housing project for a Metro Vancouver-owned site at 2115-2127 Prairie Avenue in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia.¹ The \$31 million dollar project, entitled *The Alex*, focuses on housing women, children and families, and is anticipated to include a daycare and a community health centre. Two public open houses for this project took place in the fall of 2017 in order to showcase preliminary project designs and to solicit public feedback. As Atira emphasises involving communities in their projects, these open houses were organized in addition to municipal engagement requirements.

Master's students from the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), joined Atira and additional project partners TL Housing Solutions, Atcorr Development Consultants, and IBI Group, to provide community engagement support for the fall open houses. Students Emma Watson, Lilly Wilson, and Austin Lui (WWL) developed a set

of project deliverables, including summary reports of the engagement events, with an end goal of creating a public engagement resource that is widely applicable to future Atira projects. Enclosed in this report is an Innovative Engagement Compendium (IEC), which is informed by Fall 2017 Open House activities, as well as supporting engagement literature and case studies.



Figure i. Photos from *The Alex* engagement sessions
Source: Ghamami, R., & Wai, T., 2017 (top); Austin Lui, 2017 (bottom)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gaining public support for affordable housing developments can be difficult. Public support, when leveraged well, can be critical to the success of a project. However, developments are often faced with public opposition, leading to expensive project delays.

The following report showcases nine examples of how organizations, institutions, and communities have used innovative solutions to minimize public opposition. This compendium strives to inspire new and innovative approaches to public engagement for affordable housing projects.

All case studies are categorized amongst the six themes shown in Figure ii to help readers find the most relevant cases for their needs. Most cases include more than one theme. The following pages give a brief snapshot of all nine case studies.







-  Art and Education
-  Digital Engagement
-  Media and Public Relations
-  Governance
-  Facilitation Techniques
-  Monitoring and Evaluations

Figure ii. Case Study Themes

Case Study Overview

1. Co-housing

[ro*sa]²²

Co-housing is a model that empowers future residents to design a home that suits their lifestyle.

Championed by Vienna's Housing Authority, co-housing is a new housing model where residents participate during all stages of development, and often includes a collective ownership structure similar to a co-operative.

[ro*sa]²², a co-housing example from Vienna, used feminist philosophies in all aspects of design. Woman-headed households worked with the architects, municipality, and community to develop a 40 unit mixed-tenure, mixed-income housing complex, designed specifically for the future tenants' lifestyles. The tenant-led Board of Directors works with the Housing Authority to help subsidize rent and find suitable tenants who are in need of affordable housing.



2. Managing Local Opposition

Community Acceptance Strategies Consortium

This framework from Northern California, called "Managing Local Opposition" (MLO) outlines a strategy to identify a project's key stakeholders, build public support, and to address the most common concerns in social housing developments.

The six step framework includes: researching and planning, preparing a political strategy, building active community support, working through concerns of community members, protecting and using legal rights, and developing a public relations/media strategy.

A charitable organization, St. Vincent de Paul, used this framework to combat large public opposition to their programs that provided services to the homeless population. Using art and digital engagement, they were able to help de-stigmatize those accessing their services, and helped gain both public and political support for the project.



3. Housing a Homeless Shelter

Poverello Centre

The Poverello Centre, a homeless shelter in Missoula, Montana, was in need of a new location due to deteriorating building conditions. Upon announcing the new site, a wave of public opposition hit with enough force to delay the project.

Facilitators began by speaking to individuals one-on-one to build personal relationships. The participants were additionally invited to come together to hear from one another. A working group was then formed to help select a suitable location made up of city staff, community members, residents and staff of the centre, and local businesses.

This type of governance structure and facilitation technique empowered the community to change the hostile conversation into a productive one, allowing the Poverello Center's new location to open without any community backlash.



Case Study Overview

4. Community Engagement

Community Gardens

Even if public opposition does not hinder the development process, it does have the potential for increased hostility amongst the neighbouring community and residents if tensions are not resolved. It is important to consider designs, programs, and initiatives that can address any tensions after the development phase of a project is completed.

Community gardens are one example of creating greater cohesion between the existing community and newly-established residents. They may be utilized for a variety of purposes, such as involving youth, educating people on healthy food and sustainability principles, ensuring food security, and building more community connections and social capital.



5. Educational Boards

Non Profit Housing of Northern California

Many of the common concerns brought up at public consultation events are often based on myths and negative stigmas. An individual's understanding of "social housing" or "affordable housing" may stem from a place of fear fueled by these myths.

Infographics and educational boards can be used to easily convey a message that can debunk myths. Boards are regularly used to present information about a development. However, these tools can also be used creatively. By understanding what the concerns will be, and proactively addressing them by educating the public using graphically interesting, appealing, and intelligible visuals, participants will be more informed before passing judgements.

Infographics are most effective when used in tandem with other strategies that can address people's fears, such as one-on-one conversations, storytelling, or other creative facilitation techniques.



6. Community Partnerships

Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership

This project, based in Cornwall, UK, is an example of true collaboration between residents and agencies. By collaborating to transform one of the poorest and neglected areas of the UK, the community has since seen drastic improvements on almost all measures, including safety, education, health, and employment.

Health practitioner Hazel Stuteley started from the ground up by recruiting a few community members to help with the regeneration efforts. This small group of residents began involving agencies such as the police department, health officials, schools, and community associations to help.

This story shows the power of collaboration, and how a coordinated effort, led by the residents, can lead to neighbourhood change.



7. Art & Education

Marian House: 30 Women, 30 Stories

One of the root causes of concern from public opposition is fear and negative stigma associated with public housing and other social services. Educating the public using art and storytelling is often an effective way of addressing this fear.

Marian House, a housing provider and rehabilitation centre for women and children in Baltimore, organized an education advocacy effort to address social stigma and to humanize the residents who use their services. The project included the creation of a book, videos, and a photography exhibit.

Creative engagement methods like storytelling can be used not only to advocate for a particular project, but contributes to reimagining the larger conversation on affordable housing projects and similar initiatives.



8. Storytelling & Digital Histories

Nauck Community Heritage Project & Stories for Change

Nauck, a historically African-American neighbourhood in Arlington, Virginia, utilized storytelling to inform the redevelopment of the Nauck Village Centre. Local residents' perspectives were recognized as vital to the retention of the area's history.

Storytelling was used to capture the rich history of the neighbourhood, and ensured the redevelopment incorporated these stories. A digital collection of these histories was created to archive these stories and allow the broader community to access them.

Stories for Change, an example based in Wales, UK, combines storytelling and digital engagement to understand the values, diverse perspectives, and ways of living.

Both examples show how storytelling can improve the engagement experience for participants. These cases also demonstrate how storytelling can provide valuable insight to planners and developers and be used as an outreach tool to build community.



9. Digital Engagement & Virtual Reality

Placespeak & The Mill at Moreton Bay

Placespeak, a Vancouver-based initiative, uses online engagement to not only provide information, but to allow the public to provide input for the project using surveys, polls, and discussion forums. Online engagement provides a new tool for visualizing and engaging more people in fun and unique ways.

The Mill at Moreton Bay example uses virtual reality (VR) to allow the public to experience walking through a proposed development. This strategy also allowed for expanded engagement beyond open house sessions, as participants were encouraged to share the VR experience with their family and friends through their smart phones. After experiencing the VR tour, participants completed an online survey.

These cases highlight how new technology can be used concurrently with other engagement techniques, while also supporting media and public relations campaigns.



INTRODUCTION

The Innovative Engagement Compendium (IEC) strives to support Atira Women's Resource Society (Atira) and other non-profit housing developers in exploring new and exciting forms of public engagement by providing innovative ideas for preventing, managing, and overcoming opposition to affordable housing developments. From facilitation styles, to art and education, to governance strategies, the IEC conceptualizes a variety of methods that can be incorporated into community engagement approaches for affordable housing development proposals.

Utilizing innovative tools for community engagement helps to develop the rapport needed between facilitators and community members to discuss divisive topics. New and innovative engagement techniques inspire residents to participate, improve access to participation for non-traditional stakeholders, and can foster relationship building between residents and local leaders.

One of Atira's main organizational values is to approach their work with an innovative lense. This innovation is displayed through the organization's numerous and successful programming and housing projects. The IEC therefore aims to build on this legacy by showcasing interesting and creative public engagement approaches that may be used by the society as they continue to grow.

WWL believes this Compendium will support Atira and other non-profit housing developers in exploring new and exciting forms of engagement, and by providing innovative ideas for preventing, managing, and overcoming opposition to affordable housing developments. From facilitation styles, to art and education, to governance strategies, the IEC conceptualizes a variety of strategies that can be incorporated into community engagement approaches for affordable housing development proposals.

THE CLIENT

Atira Women's Resource Society is a not-for-profit organization committed to the work of ending violence against women and children. This commitment is manifested by developing and acquiring safe, stable and supportive women-only and women-centred housing, as well as by providing related support services and working to increase awareness in an effort to end violence against women and children. Atira's values are based on inclusive feminism, harm reduction and innovation. Since 1987, Atira has been responsible for dozens of successful women's housing projects across Metro Vancouver and is a pioneer in innovative and unique affordable housing projects and programs. As innovation is a fundamental value for Atira, which is the basis of this compendium, Atira believes its mission and vision can be achieved by encouraging creativity, leadership and transparency. Additionally, education and advocacy are central to the organization's mission and will be key themes of IEC.² The IEC will be an aid to help advance Atira's mission through providing examples of innovative and inclusive engagement strategies and creating efficiencies within the engagement process.



Figure 1. Atira's Mission, Vision, Values (Atira Women's Resource Society, 2011)

COMPENDIUM GOALS

After consultations with Janice Abbott, Atira CEO, WWL's final deliverable was to explore diverse cases for addressing public opposition. The case studies herein provide interdisciplinary examples of innovative strategies for engagement, with a specific focus on housing developments where applicable. This Compendium therefore offers a wide range of out-of-the-box approaches. In doing so, the IEC contributes to the the larger body of public engagement literature for Atira—and other agencies, institutions, and community advocates—to seek inspiration and generate new ideas for engagement.

“Innovation: Our work is informed by our understanding that the women who access our services and our staff are our greatest asset and so we encourage individuality, creativity, leadership, transparency and accountability”

– Atira Women’s Resource Society Values (2011)

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Case Study Selection

The IEC provides an overview of fresh and unconventional public engagement ideas for affordable housing development initiatives. A number of engagement case studies and concepts have been provided for consideration when designing an innovative public engagement strategy for affordable housing development projects. Case studies were identified through a thorough online search and literature review. The case studies selected were chosen based on information availability as well as the criteria outlined in Figure 2.

- Regional Representation
diverse (domestic and international)
- Project Type
low-income/low-end of market housing and/or other diverse but contentious projects
- Outcome
successful projects
- Target Client Population
homeless individuals and families, individuals at risk of homelessness, women fleeing violence

Figure 2. Guidelines for report case study selection

Themes

The case studies and concepts included in this Compendium are representative of a number of public engagement themes, and are organized as such. The themes, Art & Education, Digital Engagement, Media & Public Relations, Governance, Facilitation Techniques, and Monitoring & Evaluation Strategies, were chosen based on a literature review of promising public engagement strategies and their relevance to affordable housing development. Concepts provided in this Compendium relate to housing development engagement strategies where possible. However, in order to provide the most innovative possibilities, references from civic engagement initiatives for other complex topics have also been included. Each theme's relevance is described on the next page.



Art & Education

In a series of arts and culture briefing papers, the American Planning Association (APA) highlights the importance of using arts and education during the public participation process. Arts and culture mediums are best used to increase community participation in civic life, and “inform, educate, and learn from diverse audiences, and communicate across demographic and socioeconomic lines”.³ Using the arts is an excellent way to educate the public and engage participants to work together by seeing diverse perspectives. Artistic tools for engagement may include visual art techniques, storytelling, and PhotoVoice techniques.



Digital Engagement

Like the Art and Education theme, digitally-based public engagement encourages participation, especially from those who may not participate in traditional engagement activities. Utilizing innovative digital engagement tools and techniques can improve the overall level of public commitment to a project while teasing out more perspectives than otherwise made available to decision makers through traditional public hearings or open houses.³ Initial digital engagement work, though potentially requiring more time and resources in the beginning of a project, works to develop relationships across the demographic spectrum of residents while providing educational opportunities in the early stages of project conception.



Media & Public Relations

A Media and Public Relations strategy is another feature of engagement that is best utilized in the early stages of a project. These strategies are important for improving information dissemination as well as maintaining public perception of a project. Similar to the Digital Engagement theme, a media and public relations strategy can not only work to improve project reception, but can further enhance relationships between the organization and the community. Innovative media and public relations tactics may include a social media campaign that is responsive to inquiries and conversations that occur online.



Governance

Utilizing unconventional forms of governance allows for improved community ownership of a project, which is more likely to garner support from neighbours and community members.⁴ Involving community members in the governance of a project in the development stages allows for increased insight on varying perspectives and helps to determine ways to potentially mitigate contention. Alternative forms of governance may also benefit a project post-completion, providing autonomy to residents of a development.



Facilitation Techniques

Different facilitation techniques can provide opportunities to work with communities to overcome general misunderstandings and overall opposition to contentious projects. Engaging a broad range of community stakeholders well before initial project development can help to work through underlying systemic challenges that are often the root cause of housing development opposition. When public engagement participants are involved in activities that provide more autonomy and overall say in a project from the very early stages, they are more likely to support the process. In turn, even if a participant is opposed to the overall outcome of a project, if they understand the process, they will have a better appreciation for why certain project decisions were made.⁵



Monitoring & Evaluation

Utilizing appropriate monitoring and evaluation techniques can support a project with achieving stated goals and objectives, while creating greater transparency about how decisions were made during the engagement process. Developing a robust monitoring and evaluation strategy early on in a project can help gather consistent and accurate data while improve an organization's social license: "a local community's acceptance or approval of a company's project or ongoing presence in an area".⁵



Co-Housing [ro*sa]²²

QUICK FACTS

Location: Vienna, Austria

Project completed: 2009

Cost: \$10 million CAD

Size: 40 units from 1 - 5 bedrooms

Keywords: Co-housing, women-centred, co-operative



Figure 3. [ro*sa]²² building (Cohousing Cultures, 2018)

Context

[ro*sa]²² is a women-led housing co-operative located in Vienna, Austria, that was designed by a small group of women who shared a vision of housing that fit their needs and values. The subsidized rental project was created in partnership with the Vienna Housing Agency and the City of Vienna. The building consists of 40 units and was completed in 2009 with a total budget of 6.6 million Euros (approximately \$10 million CAD).⁶ [ro*sa]²² is a unique example of how using a new mixed-tenure model engages the future residents and community.

Process

The project was initiated by Sabine Pollak, an architect from Köb & Pollak Architecture, who conceptualized a community housing project for women. She spoke to feminist organizations around her community and recruited enough women to begin the planning stages of this new co-operative.⁴ They used feminist theories to guide the design and policies of their co-operative. Working together as future residents, the women designed the spaces to revolve around their lifestyle, family sizes, and values.



Take Aways

The Board of Directors of [ro*sa]²² run the operations and management of the building.⁶ The Board consists solely of women residents/members of the co-op. The group of women incorporated as a charity non-profit in order to approach the local housing authority and partner with other local organizations.

The public housing authority provides subsidies to ensure units stay affordable.⁴ They are also responsible for the selection of 1/3 of the tenants, while the [ro*sa]²² Board of Directors selects the other 2/3. Leases for tenants selected by the

Board must be signed by the female in the household. Homeownership is also a possibility if you have lived in the building for more than 10 years.⁶

The building design includes a workshop, feminist library, community roof terrace, sauna and relaxation room, broad corridor for increased social connection, a community garden, and flexible units to accommodate for any lifestyle.⁴ The result is a tenant-driven housing project that is designed, owned, and managed by and for the residents of the building.

This example of co-housing empowers the future tenants of the development to help shape the space in a way that suits their lifestyle. This model reduces public opposition by providing more opportunities for the residents to interact with the neighbours throughout the design process, preventing negative stigmas and misinformation.

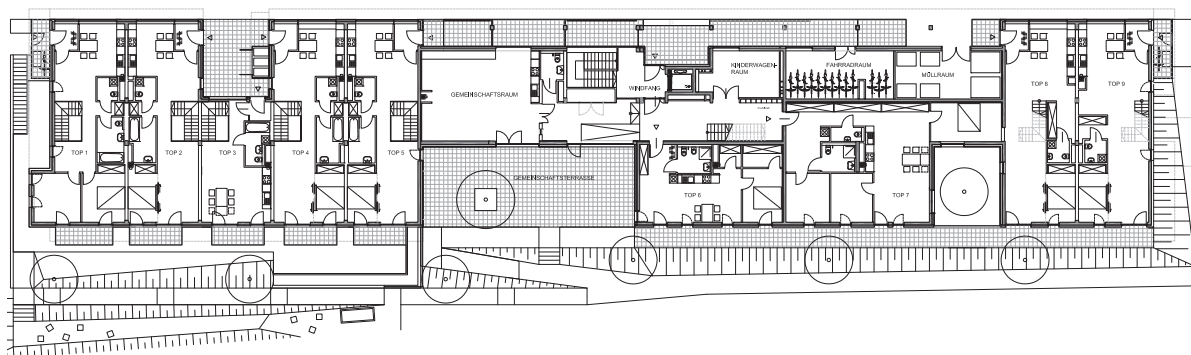


Figure 4. [ro*sa]²² building floor plan example (Cohousing Cultures, 2018)

2

Context

Like many non-profit housing agencies, the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPHANC) recognized that local opposition was a persistent problem for housing projects across Northern California. An initiative was needed for housing providers to learn to manage this problem collaboratively and more effectively. Therefore, NPHANC created a series of toolkits to help other agencies and developers address local opposition to non-profit housing developments.⁷ This program expanded to the Community Acceptance Strategies Consortium (CASC), a group of housing providers tasked to get developments approved with minimal local opposition.⁸ CASC developed a framework called Managing Local Opposition (MLO). The MLO framework prioritizes a proactive and collaborative approach. It identifies the key stakeholders such as staff, project partners, community allies, government, and media as the critical drivers for success.

One organization that CASC helped was St. Vincent de Paul, a charitable organization based in Marin County, California. The St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room in the City of San Rafael provides services for the homeless, including meals, housing, and outreach and education programs. They have served 16,763 hot meals and helped prevent 391 people from being homeless.⁹ At first, the public and their representative City officials, were opposed to such an organization in their neighbourhood, repeatedly asking for it to close down, or move somewhere else. CASC was asked to help manage this negative press. CASC used their MLO framework (Figure 5) to plan and implement their strategy.

Managing Local Opposition The Dining Room

QUICK FACTS

Length: 3 months

Location: Northern California

Key Words: local opposition, strategic planning, housing

Process

The MLO framework, as described on the previous page, is outlined in 6 steps:

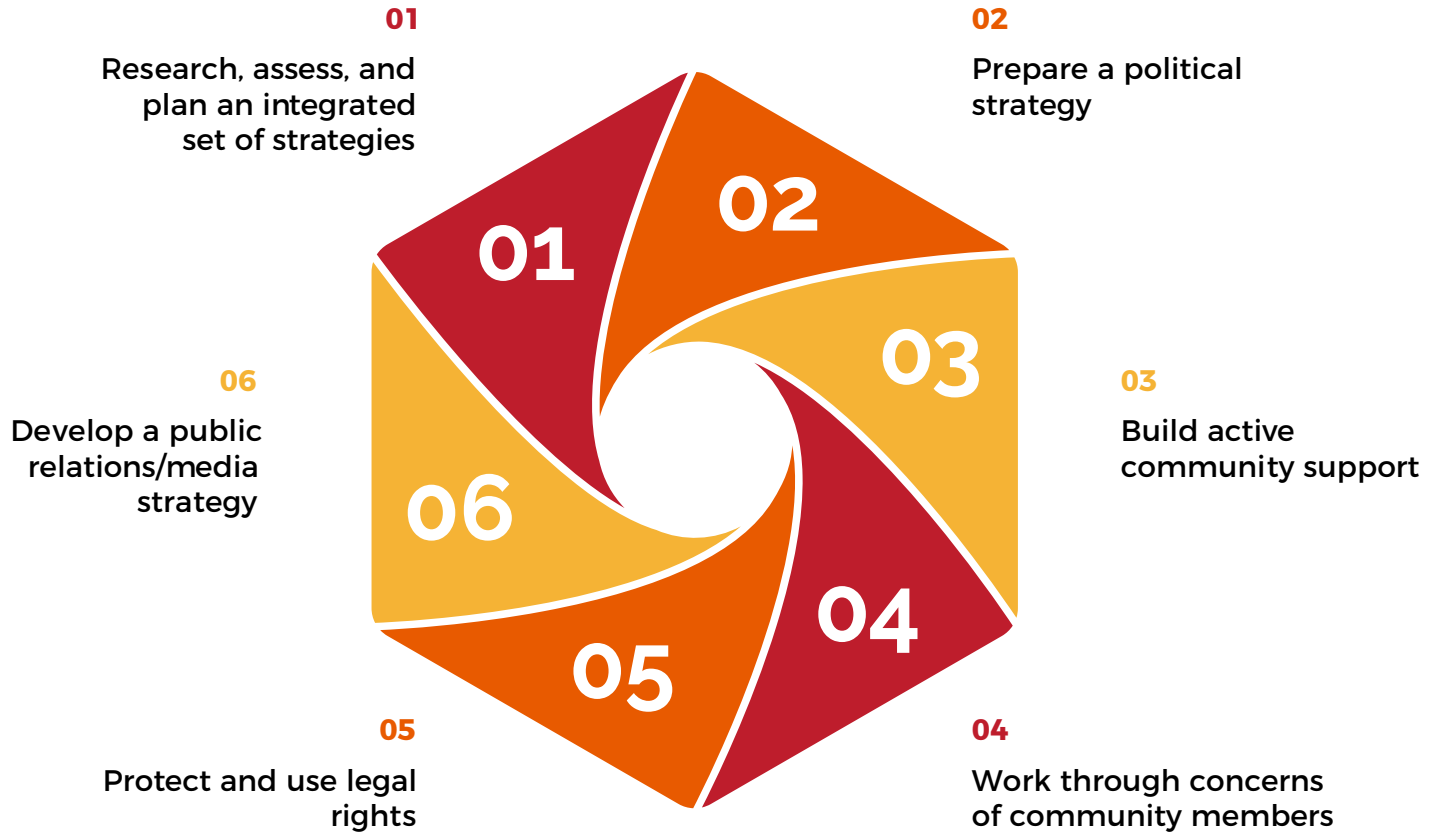


Figure 5. CASC MLO 6-step Framework (Community Acceptance Strategies Consortium, 2000)

Each of these 6 steps is expanded on in Figure 6. The steps are not prescriptive, but act as a guiding framework based on CASC's 10 years of experience of consulting on a variety of public engagement processes. Depending on the project, these steps may not happen chronologically, and may be an iterative process.

Different strategies may be utilized depending on the types of concern. CASC's 7 bases of concerns identify common and predictable points of opposition, described as follows:⁸

1. Lack of information/misinformation
2. Fear of negative impacts
3. Complaints about the process
4. Prejudice or bias towards prospective residents
5. Conflicting interests on land use concerns
6. Value Conflicts
7. Issues unrelated to the proposal



Figure 6. MLO Framework attributes (Community Acceptance Strategies Consortium, 2000)

04

Work through concerns of community members

- Prioritizes individual interactions to address fear-based concerns by building personal relationships based on honesty and trust.

05

Protect and Use Legal Rights

- Use litigation as a last resort. It takes time, energy, and money for all parties involved, and will often increase hostility, and minimizes opportunities for collaboration.
- However, legal frameworks can be used to convince politicians of their civic duty, and frame the legal requirements of consultation.

06

Develop a public relations & media strategy

- A well-thought out public relations strategy can be the difference between a project that leverages the media, and a project that must react to the media. The most important part of developing a public relations strategy is to ensure consistent messaging through designating a spokesperson or creating a messaging guide for advocates.

Take Aways

This framework assumes that public opposition is inevitable, and predictable. It recognizes the importance of strategic planning, and finding ways to turn potential challenges into opportunities. Identifying key stakeholders, supporters, and potential issues early on in the process allows an organization to take measures to minimize local opposition.

Figure 6. MLO Framework attributes cont'd

3

Context

In May 2011, the Poverello Centre, a homeless shelter in the city of Missoula, Montana, announced plans to build a new facility to replace the deteriorating one used since 1981. After years of trying to meet the increasing demand within their current facility, the Poverello's Board accepted that the old building was undersized, not accessible, and, due to faulty plumbing and out-of-code wiring, unmaintainable. A controversy erupted when Missoula's local newspaper announced the site for the new Poverello Centre to be in a more suburban area close to an elementary school. Within a week of being announced, the PTA for the neighbourhood school formed a Facebook group protesting the new Poverello Centre site, and the local paper received ample communications opposed to the move. To respond to these outcries, the Mayor advised the Poverello Centre to delay their purchase of the land in order to formally address community concerns. The City then retained the

National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), a non-profit that provides training and facilitation to reduce prejudice and seeks to resolve conflict, to engage a large number of people who held diverse and divergent opinions about the Poverello Centre, and to provide participatory planning opportunities to inform the re-siting in a three month time period.¹⁰

Housing a Homeless Shelter Poverello Centre

QUICK FACTS

Length: 3 months

Location: Missoula, Montana

Keywords: just practice, restorative justice, deliberative democracy, conflict resolution

Process

The process for community deliberation for the Poverello Centre includes the following phases outlined in Figures 7.1 & 7.2.

Throughout the process, 16 facilitators took different community deliberation approaches: Just Practice, restorative justice, and deliberative democracy. This case provides a high-level overview of the innovative principles of each approach, as expressed in Figure 9.

This case highlights the importance of multiple facilitators, and innovative theories of deliberation that follow due process, and therefore engage many members of the community and achieve the community buy-in needed to build and operate a homeless shelter.

The outcome of the Poverello Centre's re-siting ascertains that including structured governance approaches during community consultation increases the likelihood of community buy-in. By implementing innovative community deliberation techniques, in community engagement there is an increased potential for community reflection and understanding, and is therefore useful for addressing divisive community conflict.¹⁰



Assessment

The facilitators listened to 52 individuals during the course of the first week, and one person at a time, the act of listening began to create relationships between the diverse parties engaged in the controversy. As participants felt listened to, valued, and supported by the facilitators, they increased their willingness to enter into a community process with others they would not normally listen to, value, or support.

The assessment phase generated critical buy-in for the next step bringing people together.



Teaching-Learning

The facilitators directed participants to self-select into a number of stakeholder groups, and then asked to discuss questions such as:

- ▶ What are 1 to 2 key concerns to be addressed at any new facility?
- ▶ What do others not understand about your position?

Despite some extreme differences in perspectives, the sharing in the first community meeting was strikingly nuanced and respectful, due to the respect shown by each participant through the facilitation structure and the ability to hear divergent perspectives in each stakeholder group.



Figure 7.1
Poverello
Community
Deliberation
Phases
(Thurber, 2016)



Work Group

To continue moving toward collective action, NCBI established a work group charged with vetting possible locations based on the concerns expressed in the initial community meeting. The 12 member work group was diverse by design, and included:

- ▶ Municipal staff; a police officer, a member of the planning staff, and a member of the mayor's staff
- ▶ A member of the Westside neighborhood group
- ▶ A Poverello Center resident, staff member, and board member
- ▶ Business community members



Community Deliberation

This process, ending with community deliberation to determine a site, brought to light the importance of community inclusion to achieve mutual respect and appreciation for divergent needs. As a member of the Poverello Board states:

“The Poverello Center fully belongs to this community. We are of course free to make decisions about our future and our services, but without support and buy-in from the community, there is no way for us to successfully see this vision play out”

Figure 7.2
Poverello
Community
Deliberation
Phases Cont'd

Take Aways

Community buy-in and involvement allows projects to be more successful from their inception. By using innovative facilitation techniques, utilizing many facilitators, and by structuring conversations using different governance techniques, members of the community feel like their concerns are being taken into account. This reduces the feelings of fear, animosity, and opposition towards contentious development, and therefore allows development to proceed.

Deliberative Democracy

Members of society make informed decisions through respectful reason-sharing, questioning one another's conclusions, and critical reflection. Deliberative processes may legitimize decision making; even when people object to the final outcome, they are more likely to accept decisions if their perspectives have been thoughtfully considered. By seeking perspectives from those who will be impacted by the decision (as opposed to simply imposing a decision on them), a group, organization, and/or government demonstrates respect for its members.

Restorative Justice

Rather than focusing on assigning blame or delivering punishment, restorative justice seeks to repair harms and restore damaged relationships. Through facilitated group sessions, participants share with and hear from one another, learning how each member experiences the conflict, and realize the emotional impacts of the situation. The process then shifts to identifying areas of agreement and possible reparative action.

Just Practice

The Just Practice framework suggests five interlocking principles which can guide social work research and practice: meaning, context, power, history and possibility. Applying the Just Practice framework to the shelter relocation raises critical directions for inquiry, such as:

- What meaning do various stakeholders assign to the Poverello Center?
- What contexts, background experiences and conditions inform stakeholder viewpoints?

Figure 8. Poverello Centre Approaches to Community Deliberation (Thurber, 2016)

4

Community Empowerment Community Gardens

QUICK FACTS

Locations: New York, Iowa, Massachusetts, Vancouver

Key words: youth participation



Figure 9. Gardening the Community (2017)

Context

Community gardens serve an important social function in a community. They can provide activities, serve as an informal gathering spot, or as a venue for community outreach activities related to gardening and nutrition. While the primary goal of a community garden is to produce fresh local food, the need to maintain them draws various generations and cultures to the site. In low-income neighborhoods, community gardens can be the driving force connecting nutritious food to populations that need it the most.¹¹

Process

This innovation, while not a specific strategy for engagement prior to development, is an innovative concept to spur community involvement, activism, and empowerment after the development is built. There are several innovative examples of community gardens described below, where research has shown that community gardens can help to improve social networks and organizational capacity in communities, especially in lower-income neighborhoods. By encouraging the involvement of low-income individuals and families, community gardens can help them with access to:

- ▶ food
- ▶ job connections
- ▶ social ties with local residents



Figure 10. Youth Involvement in Community Gardening (DC Public Library, 2013)



Innovative Examples

City of Vancouver Greenest City Grants

The City of Vancouver administers a grant program called Greenest City Grants, whereby a registered BC Society is eligible for capital funding to support Greenest City initiatives, including a community garden, and is even more likely to get approved if led or based around youth. The application process for these grants opens in January of each year and is awarded by April. In partnership with the Vancouver Foundation, the City of Vancouver has funded over 600 projects since 2012, amounting to approximately \$2 million in grants.¹²

Digging Deeper

The organization Digging Deeper works to support backyard gardens in low-income communities. Project goal:

- ▶ to provide backyard gardens and edible perennial plants in common areas of multi-family housing.

To complete the project, Digging Deeper also provides follow-up assistance to the recipient community from experienced gardeners. This case showcases an association that provides assistance to communities to access nutritious foods and maintain the gardens. Organizations like this are funded through different grants in municipalities to provide resources to community gardens.¹³

6th and B Community Garden

This innovative community garden in New York City provides crafts programs, horticultural and science workshops, multicultural festivals, and performances that run throughout the summer within their community garden. In addition, three preschool centers work in the garden as part of an environmental curriculum to teach children gardening and nature principles and skills. This case highlights the community garden's connection to children and how they can play an influential role in curriculum at daycares.¹⁴

Take Aways

Gardening the Community

Gardening the Community in Springfield, MA strives to educate youth on the importance of nutritious foods and community empowerment through the social connections the community garden provides. A representative states:

“From a mission standpoint, the project strives to help youth understand the importance of healthy locally grown food, environmental justice, and community empowerment, as well as gain first time job experience and leadership skills, in a safe, supportive atmosphere.”¹⁵

Community gardens have a positive impact on building tenants and neighbours. Innovations such as these must be incorporated into the design of the building before community consultation (or in accordance with consultation) to get community buy-in and highlight the enhanced community connections that the development would provide. Community gardens work to engage youth and children, while improving food security for low-income residents, supporting nutritional and environmental education, and providing a gathering place for eco-friendly events and activities.

5

Context

The Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPHANC) is a great resource for innovative ideas within the non-profit housing sector. Their website provides various toolkits and resource that are accessible to everyone to use to forward the affordable housing agenda. Amongst these resources are a series of educational prompts or poster boards the NPHANC have created to provide visual relief and content for community outreach events such as open houses. The NPHANC suggests that these boards are useful when dealing with the most common concerns and fears that residents face when non-market housing is being developed in a community.¹⁶

Process

As observed at many community engagement events, there are several topics that typically spur concern and fear in participants. Educational boards can proactively work to address these common themes among affordable housing developments, efficiently tackling some of the common community fears. If prepared in advance of open houses, educational boards can address some of the questions that cause outrage. Examples of these educational boards could include:

- ▶ The impact of non-market housing on property values¹⁷
- ▶ The impact of density¹⁸
- ▶ Housing as a healthcare investment¹⁹
- ▶ Community fact sheet highlighting housing statistics²⁰
- ▶ Infographics on the region's homelessness to spur compassion²¹
- ▶ The faces of potential tenants that highlight a family or individual profile to humanize residents²²

Outreach Educational Boards

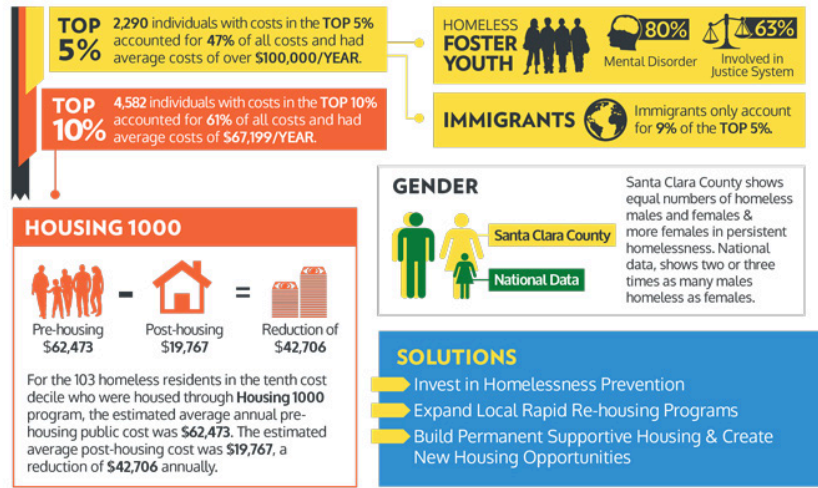
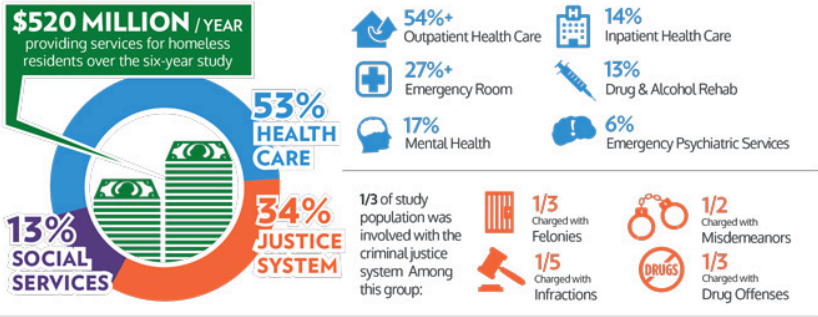
QUICKFACTS

Location: Northern California

Key Words: education, information, visual graphics

THE LARGEST & MOST COMPREHENSIVE COST STUDY OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE USA

104,206 individuals in Santa Clara County over 6 years - between 2007 and 2012



Take Aways

Providing graphic relief and research on the most common fears in the community could reassure event attendees that their concerns are being heard and some of their questions are being thought of when preparing material for the event.



Figure 11. Sample Infographic on homelessness in Santa Clara County (NPHANC, 2018)

6

Tenant-led Revitalization Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership

QUICK FACTS

Location: Falmouth, Cornwall, UK

Size: 1,500 homes

Partnership formed: 1997

Keywords: Tenant-led, interagency
collaboration, regeneration

Context

The Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership is situated in Falmouth, Cornwall (UK). The partnership takes place in a social housing development from the 1950s that includes over 1,500 homes, with a population of approximately 6,000. The Old Hill and Beacon Estates are situated in the poorest neighbourhood in the poorest county in the UK.

In the early 1990s, health practitioner Hazel Stuteley was struck by the poor conditions of the Old Hill and Beacon Estates communities. Issues were perpetuated by the fact that most social agencies, including the police, had abandoned the area. Rapid building deterioration and lack of resources prompted Stuteley to think creatively. Her solution was to harness the capacity of the community to lead the change they wished to see.

Process

Five tenants were recruited to help form a tenants' association. The tenants' association slowly grew to include more members through events and word of mouth. The association highlighted three priorities they wished to address: crime, employment, and housing conditions. With a new voice, the association began reaching out to local agencies to help with their revitalization strategy.

The partnership eventually led to successfully attaining a grant of £1.2 million (approximately \$2.2 million CAD) from the federal government to complete capital upgrades and energy efficient building improvements. This funding prompted the beginning of the Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership to help oversee the spending of this grant. The partnership later became a network of agencies and social services that collaborated to make the neighbourhood safe and livable again.

Now a registered charity, the partnership has resulted in initiatives such as outreach campaigns, educational workshops, renovations to 900 homes, community gardens, and better street infrastructure.

The Beacon Hill Community is thriving, and the partnership has inspired C2: Connecting Communities, a non-profit organization that has used this experience to develop a framework to consult with other neighbourhood projects (Figure 12).

Between 1997-2000, studies showed staggering improvement to living conditions in these communities:²³

- ▶ 50% drop in overall crime rate
- ▶ 40% drop in childhood asthma rates
- ▶ 42% drop in Child Protection Registrations
- ▶ 77% drop on postnatal depression
- ▶ 71% reduction in unemployment

STEP 1: Identify and build relationships with key residents by starting a steering committee.

STEP 2: Build capacity by delivering workshops where there are skills gaps.

STEP 3: Host a 'listening event' for resident and stakeholder feedback to identify issues.

STEP 4: Develop resources to open up communication channels to the wider community (regular committee meetings, newsletters, social media etc.).

STEP 5: Build the momentum by providing positive feedback to residents through celebrating 'quick wins'.

STEP 6: Set up new community groups and community-led activities, leading to increased community trust and co-operation.

STEP 7: Employ two or three key residents to co-ordinate activities, and measure outcomes from community-led activities.

Figure 12. C2: Connecting Communities Neighbourhood Consultation Framework (Fujiwara, Daniel et al., 2016)

Take Aways

This partnership shows the power of tenant-led initiatives, and multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary collaboration. These measurable improvements to the health and wellbeing of the entire community could not have been accomplished without this initiative.



7

Storytelling Marian House: 30 Women, 30 Stories

QUICK FACTS

Location: Baltimore, Maryland

Key Words: books, audio recording, storytelling, housing and addictions recovery, women and children

Context

To celebrate their 30th anniversary in 2012, Marian House, a Baltimore-based organization offering rehabilitative and housing services to women and their children, embarked on a storytelling project as a method of public education and advocacy.²⁴ The final product, a book entitled “30 Women, 30 Stories: Journeys of Recovery and Transformation”, highlights the journeys of 30 Marian House alumni as they overcame challenges of trauma, addiction, homelessness, incarceration, mental health, and poverty.²⁵

Process

Marion House engaged Peter Bruun, an artist, educator, and community activist, to work with them on this project. In addition to the book, Peter helped curate audio stories, a DVD, and a travelling exhibition highlighting the 30 women’s stories.

Peter, founder of the organizations Art on Purpose and New Day Campaign, has a long history of engaging communities on divisive topics through art. Baltimore-based Art on Purpose, is a non-profit organization that strives to guide communities through educational and artistic idea-generation processes, bringing communities together around important issues. The artwork produced by Art on Purpose artists is then used in projects to represent and “support the voices, expressions, and needs of the communities [they] serve”.²⁷

In 2010-1, the ReSPECT project utilized photography and audio workshops to empower Baltimore residents to highlight challenges of addiction, treatment, and recovery.²⁷

Also in 2011, Art on Purpose, in a partnership with the Walters Museum of Art, worked with artists and neighbourhood representatives in 23 areas throughout Baltimore for a project entitled Maps on Purpose.

Maps on Purpose utilized paint and GPS technology to “create maps that define and explore the experiences of multiple residents of a place”, helping to bridge gaps between residents of different socio-economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds.²⁸ In this instance, a collaborative creative approach was used to explore community values while providing a learning experience for those involved.³³

Peter argues that art is great for humanizing individuals on different sides of polarizing issues, and works as a magnet to attract those from the community who may not otherwise participate in traditional public engagement processes.²⁹ Utilizing an artistic public engagement approach can provide a more inviting way to bring people together on contentious issues.



“What happens in most public processes is that decisions have largely been made by the time they have the public hearing, and therefore all that citizens can do is object.”

– Professor Patrick Condon, Urban Designer²⁶

Innovative Examples

An example of how art and education might be incorporated into a public engagement strategy for affordable housing development was developed through conversations with Peter Bruun in February 2018 (see Figure 13). With a focus on desired outcomes for all stakeholders, negative preconceptions can be identified and addressed through creative mediums. This process works to build trust between potential tenants and the existing community. The following process steps may not take place in sequence and are iterative in nature.

- ▶ **Local Connections:** through local community project champions, the housing development organization is able to tease out local community member perspectives on the project
- ▶ **Peer Allies:** Community champions can work with others as peer allies to build trust and develop a collective narrative.

ART & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT Prospective Artistic Engagement Process for Affordable Housing Development as adapted from a conversation with Peter Bruun, Art on Purpose (2018)



Figure 13. Art & Education Engagement Strategy (Peter Bruun, 2018)

Take Aways

- ▶ **Engage Future Residents:** Potential future residents should be engaged, working with project partners to showcase what they are looking for and what they can bring to a community.
- ▶ **Introduce Art:** Incorporating art can be done through engaging photographers, writers, visual artists, or musicians to develop a creative project with a purpose to engage a wider swath of the community. Both existing community members and future residents can be engaged by utilizing a creative medium to share their story, and describe what they love and/or what could be improved about their community.

Utilizing artistic engagement techniques can turn community engagement sessions into festivities, where input is gathered, and community interaction is fostered. These projects can culminate in

an artistic event, like a gallery opening, where individuals from both sides can share their stories and co-create solutions.

Overcoming opposition through visual art may include the use of creative tools such as community co-creation of project models, sketches, and other 3D massing and density visualizations for possible futures.³ Organizations may invite artists to facilitate workshops for community members or have the community members lead the process.

Artistic engagement tactics can provide a less intimidating, more intriguing way to engage communities. Techniques may include use of tools for community co-creation of models and sketches, interactive brainstorming tools, and other development visualizations for possible futures. Organizations may invite professional artists and/or community members to lead the process.

8

Nauck Community Heritage Project

Context

Nauck, an historically African American neighbourhood in Arlington, Virginia, was the focus of a revitalization project by the Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development in 2004. Partnering with the Folklore and Public Art sections of the Cultural Affairs Division, a creative community engagement process was developed.

Process

The Nauck Community Heritage Project in Arlington County, Virginia, is an example of community engagement through storytelling. Community leaders from local organizations and churches were contacted, and the planning department worked with them to gain local residents' perspectives through storytelling. The stories were then compiled as an oral history, used to inspire the designer of the Nauck Town Square Project and the Nauck Village Centre.³ Some of the stories were also incorporated into the town square redesign through storyboards.

The Nauck Community Heritage Project expanded their project's reach through making the oral histories collected available to the public as an online "collection of community perspectives".³⁰ Providing this oral history online, like other forms of digital engagement, allows for improved transparency between the organization and the community, and allows for improved reach and overall community participation.

Storytelling &
Digital Histories
Nauck Community
Heritage Project &
Stories for Change

QUICK FACTS

Location: Arlington, Virginia;
Wales, United Kingdom

Key Words: storytelling, community
history, revitalization, public art, art and
health, digital histories

Stories for Change

Context

Like the Nauck project, Stories for Change, based in Wales, UK, combines storytelling and digital engagement in their efforts to introduce art into the health care industry.³¹ The organization focuses on story dissemination and storyteller training. Resident Storytellers deliver Storytelling & Health training courses and workshops to mental healthcare workers and patients. The organization publishes a digital storytelling library of stories for health and wellbeing.³²

Take Aways

Collaboratively exploring community values through storytelling and collective listening allows for shared learning amongst participants. Individuals are able to “present ideas about place and experience and to define their roles in those contexts”.³ Storytelling can be used in redevelopment and revitalization projects as a way for planners and community members to understand how individuals of the community “are seeing, have seen, and would like to see their location”.³ Storytelling is appealing to participants as they are able to share their own experiences in their own voice,

and yet requires minimal materials. In the context of public engagement for affordable housing development, the APA suggests that “[b]y heeding digital stories in which community members articulate their experiences, planners can improve their understanding of a community’s needs and values.”³³ As Atira and other non-profit housing developers move forward in their public engagement activities, engaging communities through storytelling helps to break down communication barriers and lead to a more informed process.



“Stories educate, entertain and enlighten. They are vehicles for experiences and emotions.”

– Stories for Change (2018)

9

Digital Engagement & Virtual Reality Placespeak & The Mill at Moreton Bay

QUICK FACTS

Location: Vancouver, Canada;
Moreton Bay, Queensland, Australia

Key Words: digital polling, map-based commenting, discussion forums, complex development projects, immersive engagement

Placespeak

Context

Digital engagement can comprise more than information sharing. Utilizing platforms like Vancouver-based online engagement company Placespeak, digital engagement can move beyond 'informing' (e.g. via a library of resources) through the stages of 'Consulting', 'Involving', 'Collaborating' and even 'Empowering'.³³ Placespeak has provided community engagement support to a number of organizations and municipalities including New Westminster and Chilliwack. They work to engage and empower citizens in civic activities, improving connectivity while ensuring a legitimate and defensible engagement process.³⁴ Placespeak provides a number of tools, including polling, surveying, discussion forums, and map-based commenting. Platforms like Placespeak allow for improved transparency, with easily accessible results.

Process

Utilizing websites to contribute to citizen education can be helpful in curbing opposition. For their comprehensive plan development, The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) provided an online tool for depicting various Chicago futures. By allowing participants to develop their own scenarios, making choices related to land use, density, transit, etc., they can see how their choices affect things like resource consumption and household costs. Scenarios can then be shared via social media and email if the creator so wishes, inviting participation from others.³⁵

The Mill at Moreton Bay

Context

Taking it one step further, the Moreton Bay Regional Council in Queensland, Australia used virtual reality (VR) technology to help communities envision a large-scale redevelopment project entitled *The Mill*.

Process

With a goal of repurposing an old paper mill into an innovation hub and university campus, Moreton Bay printed custom cardboard VR goggles and distributed them to the community.³⁶ This effort acted as a communications strategy, generating project excitement and allowing users to share their experience with others. To ensure proper usage, Morton Bay also commissioned an instructional YouTube video.³⁶

The street-level VR program immersed users in the proposed development, allowing for height, density, and open

space assessments. An additional fly-over feature provided an alternative perspective. Once users had completed the program, they were invited to submit feedback through an online questionnaire. This approach resulted in a 40% engagement rate and an overall community project approval rate of 90%.³⁶

Take Aways

Sharing community perspectives through creative mediums like digital engagement allow for a deeper understanding of residents' needs, knowledge, and concerns. These mediums have the ability to provide a safe space where those who may not otherwise provide input may be more comfortable. A digital engagement strategy can work concurrently as a communications and public relations strategy. Utilizing unconventional mediums like VR can further increase public understanding and interest.



“Trust is built upon an ongoing two-way conversation which takes into account concerns and feedback from residents. Incorporating the feedback loop — showing citizens how and where their input has made an impact — is key.”

- Mary Leong, Placespeak⁵

This Innovative Engagement Compendium offers a series of contemporary approaches to designing and facilitating community engagement processes. This tool was crafted to provide innovative, out-of-the-box community engagement techniques that will empower the community to participate in constructive ways and to provide successful examples to model similar participatory planning processes around. The cases in the IEC provide inclusive, accessible and results oriented tactics that are based around the six key themes identified throughout:



Art and Education



Governance



Digital Engagement



Facilitation Techniques



Media and Public Relations



Monitoring and Evaluations

CONCLUSION

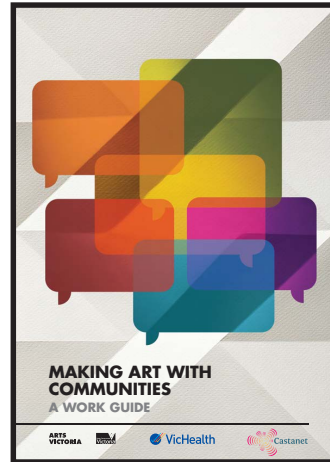
By applying these themes to participatory planning approaches, it becomes clear that the future of public engagement, as exhibited through the IEC, will include elements crucial to relationship-building between the organization and the community. These elements include:

- ▶ Turning challenges into opportunities
- ▶ Empowering residents
- ▶ Implementing creative governance
- ▶ Providing opportunities for dialogue
- ▶ Limiting misinformation
- ▶ Enabling community buy-in
- ▶ Facilitating intergenerational learning
- ▶ Empowering tenant-led initiatives
- ▶ Utilizing creative tools and mediums
- ▶ Storytelling and collective listening

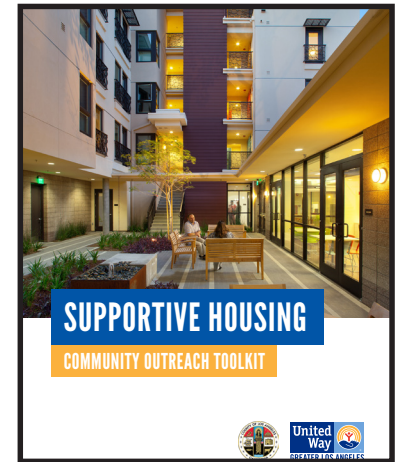
The IEC strives to provide a resource for Atira and other non-profit housing societies to further the agenda for affordable housing, and to mitigate the community opposition that they are continually faced with. WWL believes that the IEC will act as a collaborative tool for housing societies with similar visions for idea-sharing and partnerships, and to promote knowledge-sharing between societies. The Compendium is a powerful resource that can inspire many different organizations to think creatively and to stray from the status quo, empowering the people they serve and surrounding communities.

While the case studies presented here were tailored to affordable housing scenarios where possible, it is important to note the influential innovation techniques outside of the housing sector and to learn from these insurgent ideas and leverage them. As always, engagement is an iterative approach, and while this compendium is a snapshot of innovation, improvements to these techniques is necessary for context specific issues. As the world evolves, so must this resource to showcase the vast exemplary cases in community engagement innovation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



This document is a guide on how to use arts to engage various demographics within a community. Examples of community-based projects, with guides, templates, other links and resources to help those who are inspired to implement something similar are included in this document.



This document, created in partnership with the Los Angeles County and United Way: Greater Los Angeles, provides an in-depth toolkit that includes tools, templates, and strategic guides specifically for community engagement for supportive housing.

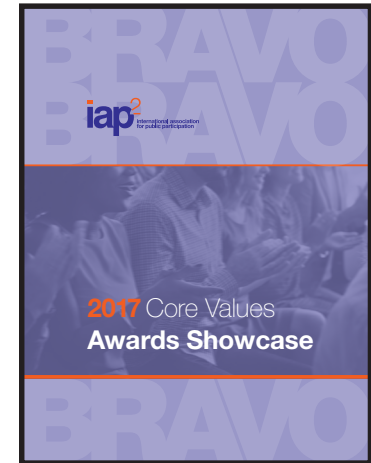
In addition to the compendium, our research has found many other useful resources that act as informative supplementary material. While not all are referenced directly in the compendium, the examples provided in this section are related to public engagement and provide different directions and visions for engagement strategies.



Created by SPARC BC, this toolkit includes an adaptable 5 step guide to effectively plan for meaningful community engagement in any circumstance, including a worksheet for strategic planning. Various engagement methods are also highlighted.



Co-Designing the Active City is an Active Neighbourhoods Canada initiative providing digitally-based tools and resources for engaging in participatory planning. The ToolBox highlights innovative initiatives for engagement that could be translated to a housing context.



This document, published every year, highlights case studies around the world (mostly Canada, USA, and Australia) on innovative engagement practices. The examples range from topics around planning, environment, health, community development, diversity and inclusion, and indigenous engagement.

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