Participation Tools
for Better Community Planning

second edition

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What's Inside

Introduction.

Public Involvement in Planning = Healthy Communities

Community involvement and collaboration plays a crucial role in how we build and develop our communities. Winston Churchill wrote, "We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us."

In more recent years, The California Endowment, the philanthropic organization that sponsored this guidebook, has been making the same point when it comes to our community's health: "Place Matters. The most important thing we learned through 14 years of initiatives and the thousands of grants made to communities across California is this: Our health doesn't begin in a doctor's office. Where we live, work, learn and play has a profound impact on our health."

Participation Tools for Better Community Planning provides an overview of public participation tools that can help communities plan for health-promoting land use and transportation. Communities throughout California and the nation are using these tools to plan and create neighborhoods with access to healthy foods, where people can safely and comfortably walk, bike or take the bus, forge social connections, and achieve healthy lifestyles.

These participation tools provide a broad range of strategies to affirm community values, needs and aspirations, which become the drivers of plans that reflect and advance the community's vision for the future. This guidebook introduces the tools through summary descriptions, examples of how they are being used, and resources for how to access them.

The Local Government Commission is the principal author of this guidebook. The LGC has been advancing the incorporation of public participation in the planning process since it released the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource Efficient Communities in 1991. An important precursor to the smart growth movement, these principles have been adopted by hundreds of jurisdictions in California and across the country. One of the Ahwahnee

implementation principles states that "plans should be developed through an open process and participants in the process should be provided visual models of all planning proposals." A few years later, the LGC published a guidebook on *Participation Tools for Better Land Use Planning: Techniques and Case Studies* – one of the first documents on this topic – which was distributed by the American Planning Association for over ten years.

This new guidebook – *Participation Tools for Better Community Planning* – is funded by The California Endowment and updates the original guide with the incredible array of new tools that have emerged in the 21st century, including those that are being used to address the needs of low-income, underserved communities.

The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities program (BHC) is in the forefront of community planning that acknowledges the nexus between land use and health. Examples surveyed in this guide are community-planning efforts aligned with the BHC's objective of health-promoting land use and transportation in low-income, ethnically and culturally diverse communities in California, including areas where there are BHC programs at work.

The Value of Public Participation in the Planning Process

It is well understood that public participation is a cornerstone of democratic society. It is particularly important and rewarding to bring community members into the local planning process because the resulting decisions often have a direct and palpable effect on their daily lives. Many practical reasons to engage residents in planning include:

Debunk myths and misunderstandings between residents.

Intensive and interactive community involvement in planning provides the setting in which strangers with competing values and interests, apparent or real, can become neighbors, leading to understanding, trust and respect. This will go a long way toward creating consensus around shared goals and objectives.

Help people understand project tradeoffs.

A proactive planning process that includes a well-designed community involvement component allows residents to understand the thinking behind what is being proposed, assess tradeoffs, and assure that most people will be happy with the plan and individual projects at buildout. This will also reduce the likelihood of contentious battles before councils and planning commissions.

Ensure that good plans remain intact over time.

City councils, planning commissions and County boards may change over time. City managers, county administrators, planners and agency staff may come and go. A plan created with residents and stakeholders with long-term investment in the community will produce institutional memory to ensure good plans remain intact and evolve when needed.

Expedite the development process for projects that meet goals of residents.

Well-designed projects that fit within a community but haven't included public involvement may face opposition that slows or stops development. A plan created with robust community engagement produces clear expectations and incentivizes good projects by reducing the time and cost of approval.

Improve the quality of planning.

Technical experts are necessary but cannot be expected to generate good ideas without the involvement of residents and others that experience the community everyday. Programs and projects that are the result of an informed citizenry in collaboration with skilled professionals will be responsive to community needs and superior in the long run.

Enhance trust in local government.

Carrying out a public participation process and then ignoring the participants' comments will lead to public mistrust of government and its elected officials. Local governments seeking public participation must want and be willing to accept input if they expect the citizenry to have trust in their leadership.

Former Mayor Rick Cole, commenting on the experience of creating a new general plan in Pasadena, CA, expressed the true essence of public participation: "Out of our effort to have thousands in the community participate came the Seventh Principle of the new general plan: Citizen Participation Will Be a Permanent Part of Achieving a Greater City. This principle has changed government, making it more open, responsive and effective. It has also raised the level of trust among citizens — not in trusting City Hall, but in trusting that they own City Hall."

Principles of Successful Community Planning

To gather more perspectives about participation relevant to community planning for health-promoting land use in California's ethnically and culturally diverse communities, the Local Government Commission held focus groups with organizations and local jurisdictions associated with The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities program. We asked them about the elements and indicators of success for community planning participation efforts they have experienced, and about important considerations in selecting tools for a planning effort, such as those associated with economically disadvantaged or disenfranchised communities.

Principles and standards to ensure a successful community planning participation effort emerged from the conversations. They are outlined below.

Inclusiveness. Successful participation goes beyond the voices of "the usual suspects." It includes and is accessible to the full spectrum of community stakeholders. Equity planning emphasizes strategies to engage marginalized groups, such as low-income or underrepresented ethnic populations.

An inclusive participation effort accommodates cultural and language needs. To ensure an accessible, inclusive outreach effort, local governments should retain staff and require consultants that have experience working with culturally diverse communities.

Respect. Community members are recognized for their expertise in the issues affecting their communities.

Relevance. Successful participation efforts address issues that community stakeholders have identified as important. An understanding of community values, needs and aspirations is critical to a successful planning process.

Clear Purpose and Scope. A roadmap of the effort's purpose and process is available from the start. Community members know the lead organizers and the roles of all participants, from governing bodies to agencies to technical experts to residents. They understand how their input will be recorded and used. Requests are clear: exactly what is being asked and why? The scope of the effort is understood, including the issues and problems it can address, as well as those that it cannot or is not well-suited to address.

Knowledge. Community members require accurate, understandable information to provide quality input and useable feedback. They have access to tools and technical assistance enabling them to collect and convey information to planners, consultants, and decision-makers, and to empower them to develop their own ideas for improvements and evaluate proposals from others.

Relationships. Successful community planning efforts strengthen relationships among community stakeholders, including individuals and organizations. They leverage existing relationships to build trust and ensure inclusive participation, effective communication and sustained engagement.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) often have experience and relationships within a community that are essential to inform any planning effort. Communication with and among CBOs before a planning effort starts will inform the process and methods. CBOs can be liaisons between local government staff and the stakeholders that they know and serve.

Trust. Successful participation efforts require trust. Community members participate in planning efforts to the extent that they trust the organization or entity that organizes it. Communication with and among CBOs before a planning effort starts can strengthen relationships that create trust.

Sustained Engagement. Successful community planning participation efforts are ongoing. Community stakeholder relationships are established before a planning process is initiated, and they don't stop after a plan is adopted. Successful efforts include the means for ongoing community engagement to tackle concerns and achieve aspirations.

Results. Community members need evidence that the plans they help create are viable. Plans that capitalize on opportunities for quick returns give participants faith that their participation is effective. An example would be adding bike lanes to a roadway as part of a routine pavement resurfacing project, establishment of a community garden on a vacant lot, or a demonstration project using low-cost installations that residents can help build, maintain, experience and test prior to longer-term, permanent, more expensive changes.

Chapter 1.
Getting the People Out

Community planning events, whether small meetings or large-scale workshops, whether conducted indoors or outdoors at the site, street, block or neighborhood of interest, need robust public involvement to maximize the success of the resulting plans.

Know Your Community

Getting the public interested and involved in planning requires a deep understanding of the stakeholder environment in order to shape meaningful and engaging events. Local governments, community-based organizations and business associations can use their contact lists, census data and other resources to shed light on stakeholder demographics, but a more nuanced, "sixth sense" understanding can be achieved by forming an advisory group of about 6 to 12 representatives from agencies and the community to assist with public outreach.

An advisory group focused on outreach is used to raise awareness of sensitivities that project organizers need to be aware of, stakeholders to engage in the public process, and additional background information and technical data that can help with developing the plan.

The group provides guidance on how to reach residents and businesses that don't typically participate in planning efforts, and to help with direct outreach.

The group also helps identify the best locations and timing for events, and companion activities to maximize participation.

At the outset, the advisory group asks: Who has knowledge to engage all segments of the community? Is there anyone missing that should be here? The group then helps devise the outreach strategies, from messages to materials to delivery. Finally, group members advance the word through their networks.

It is important to note that "advisory group" as discussed here is distinguished from "advisory committee," which may have functions beyond public outreach. While the advisory group is focused on maximizing inclusiveness and public participation at events, an advisory committee may also act as a representative body on behalf of stakeholders to develop the plan.

In this case, it is necessary to be clear and intentional about the authority, weight, function and responsibility given to the advisory committee versus the public at community events. In addition, the greater the weight of the input from the advisory committee, the greater the attention that is required for committee selection criteria to maintain community trust and the credibility of the process.

Advisory committees as a public participation tool are discussed further in the next chapter.

Values-based Messaging

Values-based messages draw on a deep understanding of community concerns and aspirations to communicate the relevance of a planning effort in addressing local needs. Values-based messaging communicates information in a way that is meaningful and accessible to community members by framing it in terms of their values. It answers the question, "how does this affect me?"

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program's outreach for planning a downtown park in Merced, for example, used values-based messaging by asking community members what they felt was needed to provide healthy, outdoor recreation for local youth. The marketing effort also asked kids directly what park amenities they wanted, and would use. Connecting park planning with the broader value of community health helped to communicate its relevance to community members.

The means of delivering the message is just as important.

Personal invitations from trusted community-based organizations and more informal associations can be the most effective. These entities have relationships, contact lists and local "street" knowledge that can help create the most effective ways for reaching the community. Mailed notices may end up in the trash.

Flyers distributed by a church or temple may reach their target. Automated "robo" calls to families from schools will get the attention of parents.

Email, text communications and social media are effective message and notice delivery tools in the growing number of communities with extensive Internet access.

Learn more about values-based messaging:

➤ "Values. Value. Voice. The 3 V's of Social Purpose Branding." The Metropolitan Group, 2010. metgroup.com/assets/700_3vsarticlescreen.pdf

➤ "Successful Advocacy, A Values-Based Approach." The Metropolitan Group, 2009. metgroup.com/assets/667_mgadvocacyarticlescreen.pdf

➤ "Marketing that Matters: 10 Practices to Profit Your Business and Change the World." Chip Conley and Eric Friedenwald-Fishman. Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006.

High-Visibility Outreach

There are numerous examples of effective, relatively low-cost ways to increase awareness of upcoming events. Here are just a few:

➤ **Outdoor message boards.** High schools, city halls, libraries, community centers and churches may have electronic or changeable marquees or message boards to announce events.

➤ **Banners.** Many communities have the ability to string banners across roadways on main streets, near parks or other public spaces that could be used to publicize events.

➤ **Changeable traffic message boards.** Local public works and police/sheriff departments may have electronic message boards that can be located at high-traffic locations to advertise events.

➤ **Folding traffic and construction barricades.**
Virtually every jurisdiction has a maintenance yard full of these portable barricades, some with flashing yellow lights. Poster boards can be attached to these and placed at high-visibility locations.

➤ **Multilingual flyers and posters.** Flyers and post-cards that incorporate local art and photographs can be developed with two languages on either side and sent home with school youth, distributed electronically, handed out door-to-door, and distributed at other locations. It is simple to convert an 8.5" x 11" flyer to an 11" x 17" poster that can be displayed at businesses and community spaces.

Multilingual Events

When groups of residents are most fluent in languages other than English, translation services are necessary to make planning efforts fully inclusive and capture ideas that reflect the community's cultural diversity.

When possible, one of the most effective ways to accommodate English and a second non-English speaking language population at an event is to have a high-fluency speaker who can comfortably present and facilitate back and forth in both languages.

This may result in longer meetings or workshops, but is a powerful way to reduce barriers and facilitate communication between different language groups.

A second option is the use of wireless translation headsets that enable presentations to occur in multiple languages simultaneously. Community-based organizations and learning institutions sometimes have the equipment available for check out or a fee. The price for wireless translation equipment has come down in recent years, but still requires several thousand dollars to purchase.

A third option often used is to simply have individuals sit together with an interpreter. But care must be taken to minimize the sense of marginalization that can occur by separating a small language group from the majority group.

Whatever the method used, linguistically and culturally competent interpreters should be available as needed to welcome participants at the door and provide support during the event.

Timing and Location

To be included, stakeholders must be able to show up. Some considerations to make workshops accessible include:

➤ **Major type of employment and how this affects people's availability.** Weeknight meetings after 5:00 p.m. accommodate many workers' schedules. Saturday morning workshops might work better in some communities. For residents working in agriculture, Saturday mornings and afternoons may not work during the harvest season. Are K-12 schools in session? This could mean more families are in town and schools are available for publicity and holding events. Check with the advisory group and others about the best times to schedule public workshops.

➤ **People with children often need childcare** to attend community-planning events. This accommodation is critical in places with a high population of young children.

➤ **How will people get to the event?** If car-ownership rates are low, hold the meeting in a neighborhood location within walking distance or on a transit line or arrange for vans to help with transport.

➤ **Locating your event geographically within the community** provides context, invests in the location, and accommodates stakeholders' travel and other needs. Possibilities for accessible locations for community planning workshops might range from public schools to favorite community hangouts, and are limited only by the imagination.

The City of Richmond's "PlanVan" for its General Plan 2030 is a novel example of how to make community outreach events geographically accessible. The PlanVan was equipped with information and interactive community input activities related to the general plan update process, and staffed by city planners and other technical experts. It operated as a mobile workshop that circulated to schools and other community locations throughout Richmond during the planning process.

Make It Festive

Provide food.

Food and refreshments will draw a bigger crowd. Conflicts with a family's mealtimes can interfere with people's ability and desire to attend events. Providing healthy snacks or finger food is a courtesy to participants at events held near mealtime.

The presence of food also sends a strong welcome signal. Eating together creates a friendly and informal setting for sharing ideas. And vendors appreciate the business and the chance to showcase local flavor.

High schools and community colleges often have culinary classes with students looking for food-service opportunities. Community associations may wish to contribute samples of local cookery or tastes of traditional ethnic foods.

Fire departments have been known to donate food, volunteers and barbeques as part of community-planning events.

Celebrate local culture.

In most communities, there are conduits to dance, music and art that can be tapped for events to add entertainment as another draw for participation and to remind community members of their local assets.

High-school bands and choruses, hired or volunteer mariachi performers, traditional dance troupes, Taiko drummers and an art exhibit are examples of companion activities that have taken place at participatory-planning events conducted by the Local Government Commission in partnership with local governments and community volunteers.

Involve Youth

"**T**hink of the children" is a common refrain used by elected officials, community advocates and parents during public discussions. More than that, we can involve youth directly in decision-making about the future today.

Communities have at least two very compelling reasons to involve youth in the planning process, whether it concerns designing a specific site or envisioning a whole city.

Knowledge of how children experience the world around them can be instrumental in decisions about the design of schools, streets, neighborhoods, parks and other community spaces.

Youth perceive different problems and opportunities than adults since they regularly experience their neighborhoods as pedestrians, bicyclists, or passengers in cars or school buses. When adults see their communities from the eyes of children, they take notice of details such as missing sidewalks and other features that can add or detract from positive feelings residents have about their environment.

From young children to high-school students, youth often have great insights about planning solutions. Involving youth in planning is an invigorating way to educate children, expose them to early and positive experiences in civic participation, and provide them with the opportunity to interact with elected leaders and planning and design professionals. This will help prepare the next generation of leaders.

Here are some resources to learn more about educating and engaging youth in planning for their future.

Blogs and Online Resources

The American Planning Association hosts the online Kids' Planning Toolbox (blogs.planning.org/kids) and the Resourceszine (planning.org/resourceszine), a searchable database with hundreds of good ideas for involving young people or teaching them about community planning.

Books

"Where Things Are, from Near to Far" (Planetizen Press, 2009) is an entertaining, illustrated guide to urban planning for small children, written by Tim Halbur, former editor of Planetizen.com.

"City Works: Exploring Your Community" (Adria Steinberg and David Stephen, The New Press, 1999). CityWorks, the high school curriculum created at the Rindge School of Technical Arts in Cambridge, MA, describes community-planning tools designed for young people.

Educator Projects

The Academy of Urban Planning (sites.google.com/site/aupcentral) is part of New York City's public school system, and helps students obtain the academic and social tools they need to achieve their goals by stimulating their interests in discovery, self-expression and civic engagement.

Youth In Planning (youthinplanning.org/program), in partnership with the Academy of Urban Planning and Hunter College's Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, offers fellowship positions to high-school students in New York City.

The Chinatown Urban Institute (chinatownurbaninstitute.weebly.com) is a youth empowerment and professional development program offered by the Chinatown Community Development Center in San Francisco. It educates and empowers young leaders ages 18-24 to understand and take action on urban planning issues.

Y-Plan (citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/yplan.html), a project of the Center for Cities and Schools, is an initiative where youth are engaged as stakeholders and participants in local planning projects under the mentorship of university students in urban planning, design and education.

The California Center for Civic Participation (californiacenter.org) works with youth to empower them to be vital participants in decision-making processes at all levels.

Chapter 2.
Events and Processes

The tools of public participatory planning surveyed in this guidebook involve face-to-face meetings, hands-on workshops and neighborhood fieldwork, and virtual web-based participation platforms. They can be deployed in a variety of settings, combinations and formats. Which tools are selected, and how they are adapted and used will depend on a number of factors, including:

➤ The size and complexity of the geographic area in question. Is it a community building, a park, a neighborhood, an entire city or a region?

➤ Where the plan fits in the context of other efforts. Is it an update or intended to implement a previous plan, or the first effort to craft a community vision?

➤ The amount of technical expertise and input required for the plan. Are professional studies needed to develop the plan?

➤ Time and resources. Are there special timing considerations, for example, the need to complete a plan to meet a grant application deadline? How much paid and volunteer time and capacity is available for the effort?

Some planning efforts can be completed after one or two events in a short period of time involving a single local jurisdiction, while others might require months and involve an entire region.

These processes and methods often depend on partnership with local government planning, public works, health or parks departments, or regional entities like councils of governments that coordinate transportation planning for cities and counties in a geographic area.

Community Design Charrettes

A charrette, unlike a simple workshop or presentation to the public, is a multiple-day iterative process that fosters diverse and community-sourced design ideas for a given study area among any array of stakeholders. Residents, stakeholders, decision-makers, staff and technical consultants work together in meetings, workshops and site walks over a concentrated period of time to forge collaborative visions.

The process helps communities develop plans to guide new growth, stimulate healthy revitalization of neighborhoods, downtowns and corridors, and increase the safety, viability and appeal of walking, bicycling and transit for people of all ages and abilities.

Charrettes can be as short as three days for projects that cover a small area and up to a week or more for a larger, more complex area. Key principles that define a charrette include:

➤ Involve all interested stakeholders, whether they are supportive or in opposition.

➤ Develop solutions across multidisciplinary specialties concurrently, including engineering, architecture, accessibility, planning, economics, public heath and safety, urban design, education, and so on.

➤ Use short feedback loops that advance designs through proposal, review, changes and follow-up reviews in the span of hours and days instead of weeks and months

to avoid misperceptions that develop when typical outreach steps are spread out over a long period of time.

➤ Develop detailed solutions that address all potential concerns simultaneously.

➤ Organize events at a central location within the study area to be most accessible to stakeholders and the public.

Preparation for a charrette usually takes a few months to define the problem, gather the relevant information, prepare logistics, and conduct outreach to stakeholder groups and the community. The fundamental idea is to bring together all the key people with all the pertinent information to get the plan right the first time.

Key people might include, but are not limited to local planning, public works and economic development staff, elected officials, nearby residents, property owners and businesses, school officials, law enforcement and emergency responders, public interest groups, walking and bicycling advocates, environmental organizations and health officials.

The Charrette Process

The Local Government Commission has conducted more than 50 charrettes in California since 2000.

Here are the basic components:

➤ **Hire consultants**, typically land-use planners and urban designers, transportation planners and engineers, and economics experts (first one to two months of the project).

➤ **Convene an advisory group** to assist with planning, coordinating and promoting the events (at least two in-person meetings in advance of events).

➤ **Hold the events** (usually over the course of a week).

The principal activities include:

➤ **Stakeholder Group Meetings.** These meetings allow small groups of stakeholders to provide their local knowledge of the project area and discuss concerns and issues with the project team (the lead organization and agency with the selected consultants).

Each group is typically focused around a specific segment of stakeholders, such as schools, public agency staff, community service organizations, businesses, and hard to reach populations that are reticent to attend public events.

These meetings are generally held during the first day or two of the charrette, or a week prior, and are for listening purposes only to help the project team prepare for the opening public meeting and to capture issues that may not be raised in a public forum.

➤ **Opening Community Meeting.** This is an evening public kickoff event, with a local dignitary – such as a mayor, city councilmember or county supervisor – providing the welcome. A skilled speaker delivers a visually rich presentation to convey a range of possibilities to encourage an open and creative exchange among the participants.

This workshop also provides the first large-scale opportunity for public input, with exercises to identify the vision and values of the community, and prioritization of items for consideration by the consultant team.

➤ **Walking Assessment.** In this activity, one or more groups of citizens walk the project area for about an hour

with experts from the consultant team. Together, citizens and designers observe strengths and weaknesses, discuss problems and solutions for improving safety and mobility for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, and opportunities for revitalization and enhancement.

The consultants learn from residents, and residents learn from consultants about tools and strategies to address problems.

The outdoor assessment serves as a warm-up immediately prior to an indoor workshop, where participants fresh from the field will work on conceptual solutions informed by what they just saw in the real world.

➤ **Community Design Session.** Following the walk, participants view a presentation about tools and strategies to help them devise and articulate solutions for their community. Participants sit around tables in groups of eight and mark up aerial maps sized large enough for easy identification of buildings, streets and prominent features.

Consultant team members are on hand to float between design tables, answering questions from the public, and listening to the discussion. When citizens report back their findings and recommendations, the team members carefully

listen to the recommendations and ask any questions needed for clarification.

➤ **On-site Production.** The consultant team works on-site for several days, ideally in a centrally located, visible space with easy access for residents, developing recommendations and design concepts based on the ideas and suggestions of stakeholders and the public.

This enables the consultants to experience the community at all hours of the day, and provides extra opportunity for impromptu exchange with residents and stakeholders. It also helps demystify and open the plan development process to public view.

Open studio hours for drop-in visits and "pin-ups" of work-in-progress during the period allows stakeholders and members of the public to join professionals in the workspace to view initial ideas, provide likes and dislikes, and point out any inaccuracies or oversights.

➤ **Closing Presentation.** The final evening of the charrette includes a detailed review of the public input and a presentation of preliminary design concepts and recommendations. Reactions and feedback provide direction for further thought

and exploration required to fully develop the plan. This closing workshop is held at the conclusion of the charrette process to present the design solutions that have been, and are being, prepared. What the community sees at that stage is no surprise — it's a shared vision based on residents' input that everybody now owns.

The costs of design charrettes range dramatically, depending upon the length of time, number of consultants needed, and the desired final product. They may appear more costly than less elaborate public participatory-planning efforts, but financial efficiencies are gained by combining plan production and public input, instead of spreading these steps out on two parallel tracks over lengthy periods of time.

In addition, many of the charrette activities described can also serve as stand-alone tools for public input, which can be used by community-based groups and local governments for a variety of planning purposes. These objectives are described further in later sections of this guidebook.

For More Information

➤ National Charrette Institute: charretteinstitute.org

➤ Local Government Commission: lgc.org

➤ Walkable and Livable Communities Institute: walklive.org

Sample Schedule for a Community-Engagement Charrette

Pre-Charrette Visit :: 1–2 days

➤ Stakeholder meetings

➤ Site visit, documentation and mapping

Charrette Events :: 4–5 days

➤ Opening event — site walks, presentation and input activities

➤ Team production days

➤ Open studio hours

➤ Closing presentation

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
9:00 am				
10:00 am		Open Studio	Open Studio	
11:00 am				
12:00 pm	Production			Production
1:00 pm				
2:00 pm				
3:00 pm		Production	Production	
4:00 pm				
5:00 pm	Site Walk Opening Presentation Table Maps			Closing Presentation
6:00 pm		Public Pinup and Review	Public Pinup and Review	
7:00 pm				
8:00 pm				

Designing a Plan to Improve Neighborhood Connections in Baldwin Park

Baldwin Park is a predominantly Latino, mid-sized community northeast of Los Angeles with more than 20 public schools and a Metrolink regional passenger rail station, but lacking some of the pedestrian infrastructure and amenities to accommodate these assets. The community is crisscrossed by a series of major thoroughfares, with higher traffic speeds, and missing sidewalks and bicycle lanes that make it difficult to walk or ride a bike to schools, stores and other destinations.

The City of Baldwin Park partnered with nonprofit organizations dedicated to healthy environments to organize a design charrette so that community members could collaborate to identify ways to make the community more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Its partners included the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, the Local Government Commission and Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities.

The charrette was a multi-day process that included educational workshops, focus groups and walkability assessments. Prior to the charrette, the project team held small meetings with stakeholder groups to get focused community feedback on mobility and safety concerns. The team conducted five "Smart Streets" neighborhood workshops in English and Spanish, covering pedestrian and bicycle safety topics, and obtaining feedback on concerns. Focus groups represented a variety of interests, including schools, businesses, residents and high-school students.

Participants expressed concerns about children walking safely to school, the lack of pedestrian access to amenities such as recreational facilities and civic centers, and general pedestrian safety, comfort and convenience.

To kick off the charrette, the project team hosted an evening workshop at a community center, following the local Harvest Festival, with live music, refreshments and childcare. Over 200 residents participated. All events were conducted in both English and Spanish. The mayor welcomed participants and introduced the project, providing background on the City's goals to improve safety and non-vehicular mobility in the community.

The project team led participants through two exercises to start the workshop. The first asked participants to write down their long-term vision for the city's future. Several of these statements, which described a vibrant, walkable future, were read out loud and helped set the positive tone for the event.

Participants were then engaged in a "values exercise" – to write down five reasons why they valued Baldwin Park. Each value was written on a separate sticky note. Following a presentation on creating healthy, complete streets that accommodate all users, their notes were arranged on the wall by like values.
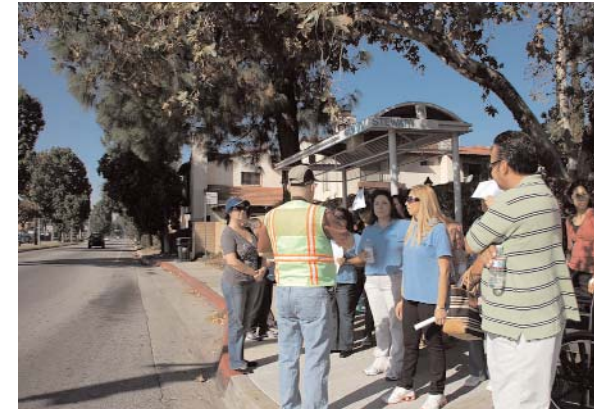
This exercise helped establish an awareness that most residents held many things in common, and that the differences that would emerge in the discussions to follow could be worked out.

At the end of the evening, participants were led through a brainstorming and prioritization exercise to prioritize identified needs and aspirations by using a sticky dot technique (see the "Asking for Feedback" section). Participants identified priorities for pedestrian improvements, including enhanced crosswalks, street lighting, wider sidewalks, more park space, better street signals near schools, and a true downtown with retail amenities closer to where people live.

Two days later, stakeholders met for a walkability assessment (see the Walkability Assessments section) of two areas around downtown Baldwin Park, along major corridors and near schools. These walking tours allowed residents and the project team to observe existing street conditions, including design, walkability, traffic patterns, intersections and crossings, sidewalk

conditions, transit stops and other streetscape features. During the walks, participants shared concerns and discussed ideas for resolving some of the problems.

Upon their return to the workshop site, the project team talked about the priorities identified at the previous workshop. This presentation, which included examples of complete streets, streets that simultaneously accommodate pedestrian, bicycles and motor vehicles in safety and comfort, provided participants with knowledge and tools that they could use to find and implement solutions.

Participants then gathered in groups of eight at tables with large aerial photos of the major corridors. For the next 90 minutes they were able to point out problems or recommend solutions through participatory mapping. At the end of the workshop, each table group shared its observations with the rest of the participants.

Using the results of the charrette exercises, the project team conducted in-depth site investigations to review existing conditions and community concerns identified through the participation exercises.

Based on all of the input received from community members and leaders and during site visits, the project team then developed an initial set of recommendations with accompanying visuals and diagrams. These results were shared with city staff and honed for presentation at the charrette's closing event a few nights later.

The closing event featured dinner and a mariachi concert at City Hall, where the project team made a presentation, in English and Spanish, to 125 elected officials, city staff, residents and other community leaders. They reviewed key findings from the community input, and shared the team's recommendations, including visuals of potential changes. They then opened the floor for participant questions, ideas and reactions.

As the last item, they conducted one last prioritization exercise — a straw poll of participants — to further refine priorities for pedestrian and bike improvements.

Recommendations included "complete streets" policies to provide safe, comfortable pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on streets throughout Baldwin Park. Design recommendations

included wider sidewalks, tree shading and bicycle lanes, lane reductions (from four or five lanes to three lanes) on streets with lower traffic volumes, and crosswalk markings, visibility and signalization. They also recommended reduced vehicle speeds, and roundabouts at select intersections to slow down traffic and make it easier for people to cross the street.

The project team focused on safety concerns in areas around schools with recommendations to provide ongoing education and encouragement to parents and their children about safer travel to school, and improved crossing-guard training.

The team also emphasized pedestrian and bicycle access to transit facilities, with suggestions for specific physical improvements prioritized by charrette participants, more transit-stop shelters with posted schedules, and secure bicycle facilities nearby.

The project team assisted City representatives with identifying funding for the recommendations, including state and federal transportation funding, grants and other assistance programs. Recommended improvements are underway.

Advisory Committees

Community advisory committees made up of a representative group of stakeholders are often used to guide planning efforts over an extended period of time. In some cases, an advisory group – a "Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee," for example – may be established as a standing committee to provide continuing input in an important topic area of community interest.

Advisory committees meet regularly during the planning process; develop an in-depth knowledge of the project and related issues; share expertise, interests, concerns and perspectives; and work to identify common interests. They can provide consensus recommendations to public-hearing bodies based on an understanding of broad-based public input and project issues. These committees are often appointed by elected officials, and are variously called stakeholder advisory groups, citizen's advisory boards and task forces.

Advisory committee members may represent such community organizations as neighborhood groups, business and professional associations, advocacy groups and faith-based institutions. These committees typically consist of about a dozen members. Larger committees can be difficult to organize. Most advisory committee members are volunteers. However, if a time commitment of more than 5-10 hours a week is expected of them, it may be advisable to find stipend funding for them.

To ensure that membership is representative, make sure that all stakeholder groups are able to participate, including hard-to-reach

or typically underrepresented populations such as low-income and ethnically diverse groups. Ensuring that representatives of trusted networks or organizations within these populations are included on the committee can help ensure that it is truly representative of the planning effort's community. The considerations for creating an inclusive community workshop environment – including values-based messaging, culturally competent tools and other considerations – also apply to an inclusive advisory committee setting.

To help the advisory committee accomplish its goals, it is important to ensure that members have a common understanding of its purpose and process from the start. This includes clarification about what type of input is being sought, its role in the broader plan development and decision-making process, a realistic timeline, and any other markers to guide the committee in reaching its objectives. Establishing a timeline at the start – including a meeting schedule and milestone dates – will help establish a shared understanding of the process.

Part of the committee's function is to develop an in-depth knowledge of the project and related issues that may not be practicable for the entire community of stakeholders to develop.

Assigning technical experts to inform the committee throughout the planning effort helps ensure that members have the convenient, ongoing access to the information they need to advise the process. Technical experts who are involved throughout the process develop a better understanding of the effort, and can provide more relevant information.

Technical experts might be traffic engineers provided by the local jurisdiction, urban planners and designers, economic development specialists, or other professionals with valuable expertise. For ongoing, consistent access, technical experts should be available at all committee meetings to provide information, answer questions, or follow up with additional information.

Visualizing a people-friendly, transit-oriented future for Oakland's International Boulevard.

Major organizers included TransForm (a member of the Great Communities Collaborative which promotes affordable, walkable communities and sustainable transportation) and Oakland Community Organizations (a federation of congregations, schools and community organizations, representing over 40,000 Oakland families).

The effort's Community Advisory Committee provided strategic input, advising the project organizing team, municipal staff and technical consultants. It also provided the overall vision and direction for the corridor and key implementation actions.

The advisory committee conducted outreach and publicity for the effort's community workshops, and organized focus groups to obtain further input on the plan's direction. They brainstormed issues and visions for the corridor, provided feedback on plan concepts and drafts, and provided input on community workshop formats and presentations.

The committee consisted of 17 appointed members representing sub-areas of the corridor, including representatives from Oakland Community Organizations and other community-based groups.

Ultimately, the advisory committee served as a liaison to area residents. The collaboration of representative stakeholders strengthened community relationships, and leveraged them to plan for a safer, healthier and more transit-supportive corridor.

The Oakland City Council accepted the International Boulevard TOD Plan in 2011. The plan has earned a Grassroots Initiative Award of Merit from the California Chapter of the American Planning Association. The California Strategic Growth Council has awarded the City almost $1 million in funding to implement the policies articulated within the plan.

Advising Oakland's International Boulevard Transit-Oriented Development Plan

A Community Advisory Committee was essential to stakeholder collaboration for the City of Oakland's International Boulevard Transit-Oriented Development Plan. International Boulevard is a major transit corridor in the East San Francisco Bay Area, and the regional planning agency had prioritized the area for further transit investments along this major corridor.

Despite having such great access to transit, however, the corridor was plagued with high crime rates, blight, poor air quality, unsafe walking conditions, and limited access to fresh food.

Organized community stakeholders created a plan for more pedestrian-friendly land uses and urban design, intended to address challenges, attract more capital investment, and maximize anticipated transit investments.

Scenario Planning

Scenario-based planning is a visioning process in which the public helps generate proposed alternatives for future growth and development – and sometimes has a direct role in selecting the preferred alternative. Proposed alternatives or scenarios are accompanied by an analysis of impacts and benefits for each scenario, such as estimated percentages of different kinds of housing and the amount of land consumed or the number of miles that average people will have to travel in cars.

This type of process is increasingly being used for large planning areas that involve more variables and bigger populations, either at the scale of the General Plan, which encompasses all the existing neighborhoods and future growth areas in a town, city or county, or at the scale of an entire region, which encompasses the communities, cities and counties of an expanded geographic area.

Scenario planning at the regional level is typically administered by metropolitan planning organizations and regional councils of government, or nonprofit community development organizations with a regional focus.

To obtain more information about regional planning efforts throughout California, locate the metropolitan planning organization or council of governments for each region at calcog.org.

Computer-based modeling tools are often used in scenario planning to generate potential development outcomes based on community input, as well as land use, demographic, economic and other data. Community stakeholders express their needs and aspirations for future land uses, and that information is entered as data into the modeling program to produce a range of development scenarios for stakeholders to consider.

SPECIAL REPORT

Blueprint Summit
A review of 2004 Regional Forum

The base case or status quo scenario projects what will happen in future years if current practices and patterns of development continue. Other scenarios can demonstrate tradeoffs with projections of economic and land-use conditions based on stakeholder input about alternative practices and patterns of development.

Scenarios educate stakeholders about the tradeoffs associated with given decisions. For example, changing the amount, type and location of different types of development (roads, houses, apartments, parks, businesses and industries) in different scenarios would help demonstrate the resulting land-use patterns and comparative costs and benefits.

A scenario might take the form of a land-use map depicting projected growth, with associated characteristics and statistics, 3D visualizations of projected growth and other relevant elements.

Public participation in scenario planning is a multi-step process. First, workshops are needed to communicate the relevance of

technical performance measures associated with different scenarios and to ascertain the measures people most care about. Guidance for developing the different scenarios is also sought. In the next phase, experts generate the alternatives, conduct analysis, and summarize the results. Scenarios are typically brought back to the public in another round of meetings and sometimes online as well, where people discuss and select the preferred scenario.

Geographic Information Systems

Scenario planning requires the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Most land-use planning agencies have some access to GIS and may be able to share these capabilities with community organizations and other government agencies in scenario-planning efforts.

GIS is designed to digitally capture, store, manage and present geographical data, and can be incorporated into community-planning participation tools. It associates data with geographic features, and supports analysis and presentation of data that can facilitate and inform the community planning process.

GIS requires significant user training, and can be costly because it requires not only purchase of GIS software, but access to digital files to generate maps, some of which are available for free, but others that require purchase. Many jurisdictions now maintain files that are available for free.

For more about how community-based organizations can develop independent capacity with geographic information systems: maptogether.org/article/nonprofit-mapping-primer

Some Participation Tools that Enable Scenario Planning

CommunityViz (placeways.com) and MetroQuest (metroquest. com) are software tools accessible to users online or loaded

onto computers that can be used at public workshops. Small-group breakouts can accommodate computer use at workshops, or facilitators can guide the discussion and presentation of the mapping and future outcomes based on policy choices. The software "shows" you the implications of different plans and choices through maps and 3D visualization.

I-PLACE3S (places.energy.ca.gov/places/demo) provides a web-based platform for scenario planning that the California Energy Commission helped to develop.

The I-PLACE3S model was instrumental in the Sacramento Region Blueprint Project from 2002 to 2004, a planning effort that informed the 2008 Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (Senate Bill 375). SB 375 requires that regional transportation planning agencies throughout California create land use and transportation plans that can demonstrate, through scenario modeling, that they support greenhouse gas reduction targets by reducing vehicle miles traveled.

For more information about I-PLACE3S and the Blueprint Project (sacregionblueprint.org), visit the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (sacog.org), the Sacramento region's transportation planning agency.

INDEX is an integrated suite of GIS-based computer and web-based scenario planning tools for neighborhoods, communities and regions, developed by Criterion Planners (crit.com). It has been used in scenario-planning efforts ranging from regional land-use planning to modeling alternative transit-station area plans.

Financial costs of commercial tools listed here vary; contact purveyors for more details. Please note that commercial products and purveyors listed in this guidebook are not an endorsement, but simply a listing of options.

In this planning process, development scenarios for low density, baseline, walkable neighborhoods and high infill options are identified.
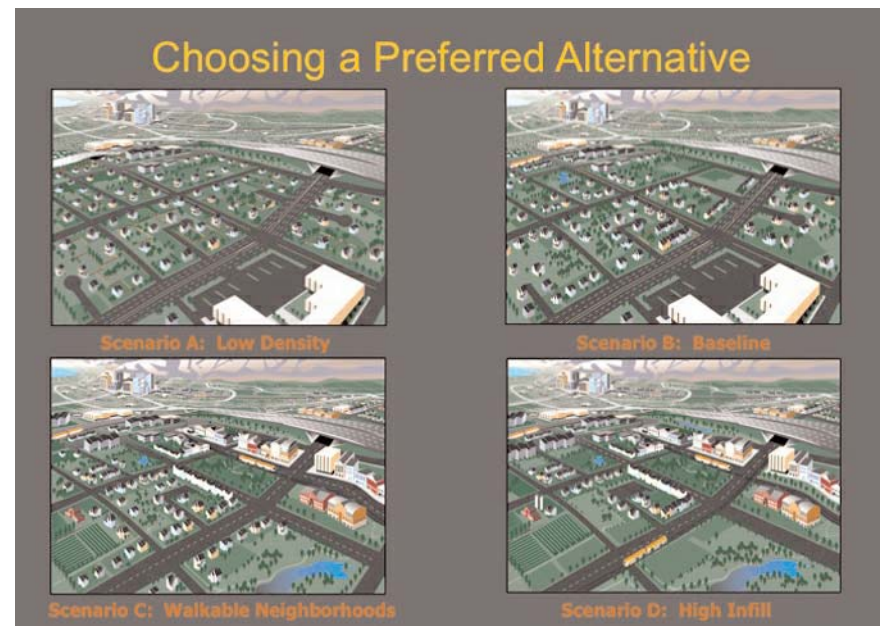
Health Impact Assessments

The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a flexible, multi-part process to determine the public health impacts of proposed decisions, including community land-use plans and projects. This process obtains public input and feedback, which helps guide the HIA, evaluate potential health impacts, and make recommendations to improve decisions.

The HIA considers health from a big picture perspective, taking into account social and economic influences, and impacts from the built environment. It also calls attention to whether certain impacts may affect vulnerable groups of people in different ways.

Completed HIAs generally result in a report that documents the process and findings, and a concrete set of recommendations to improve a decision to mitigate any identified health impacts.

The HIA complements environmental reviews of land-use plans and projects conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and equivalent state statutes, such as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Where statutes require consideration and analysis of the health effects of decisions reviewed, the HIA can be integrated into the environmental review process to meet requirements for a health-effects analysis.

The HIA can also be conducted in parallel to an environmental review, but outside the formal process if the HIA's scope is beyond what is typically included in environmental review.

Any community stakeholder concerned about the potential health impacts of a proposed plan or project can initiate an HIA. This includes public health practitioners, community groups and advocacy organizations, responsible public agencies or policy-makers. HIAs help decision-makers make informed decisions, and educate community stakeholders. HIAs are carried out prospectively – before a community plan or decision is made – and can be completed at the start of the planning process.

The HIA process is designed to engage and empower community stakeholders, build relationships and collaborations, and forge consensus around decisions. The process consists of six parts:

1. **Screening** – determining whether an HIA is needed, feasible and relevant. Stakeholder participation potential: collaboration in identifying possible projects or selection criteria.

2. **Scoping** – determining which health impacts to evaluate, the evaluation methodology, and the work plan. Stakeholder participation potential: identifying priority community health issues and methods to evaluate impacts.

3. **Assessment** – using data, research and analysis to determine the magnitude and direction of potential health impacts. Deliverables include a profile of existing health conditions and an evaluation of potential health impacts. Stakeholder participation potential: providing relevant information through surveys, interviews and focus groups; assisting in research, such as gathering and organizing community data.

4. **Recommendations** – providing strategic recommendations to manage the impacts and improve health conditions. Stakeholder participation potential: prioritizing impacts and identifying recommendations.

5. **Reporting and Communication** – sharing the results and recommendations. Stakeholder participation potential: writing, reviewing and editing findings; publicly presenting findings to the media, community organizations, elected officials and other decision-makers.

6. **Monitoring** – tracking how the HIA affects decision-making and its outcomes. Stakeholder participation potential: implementing advocacy plans, holding decision-makers accountable for long-term results.

All phases of the HIA require oversight to organize and coordinate the process, and ensure stakeholders are informed and engaged. The HIA process should have oversight from a representative advisory committee of affected stakeholders.

Committee roles and responsibilities include developing an agreement for the conduct and oversight of the HIA process, oversight and coordination, determining how the HIA will be used, and developing and implementing a resulting advocacy plan.

Stakeholder representatives could include community and advocacy organization representatives, agency officials (public health, planning, city administration, transportation, advocates), experts and consultants, elected officials, project or policy proponents, and other stakeholders such as unaffiliated residents and property owners.

The cost of an HIA can range from $30,000 to $150,000, depending on its scope, methods, stakeholder involvement, regulatory requirements and other factors. HIA funding assistance may be available through grants from charitable foundations and state or federal programs.

More information about funding is available through Human Impact Partners, an organization specializing in assisting communities with using the HIA to help create healthy places and policies.
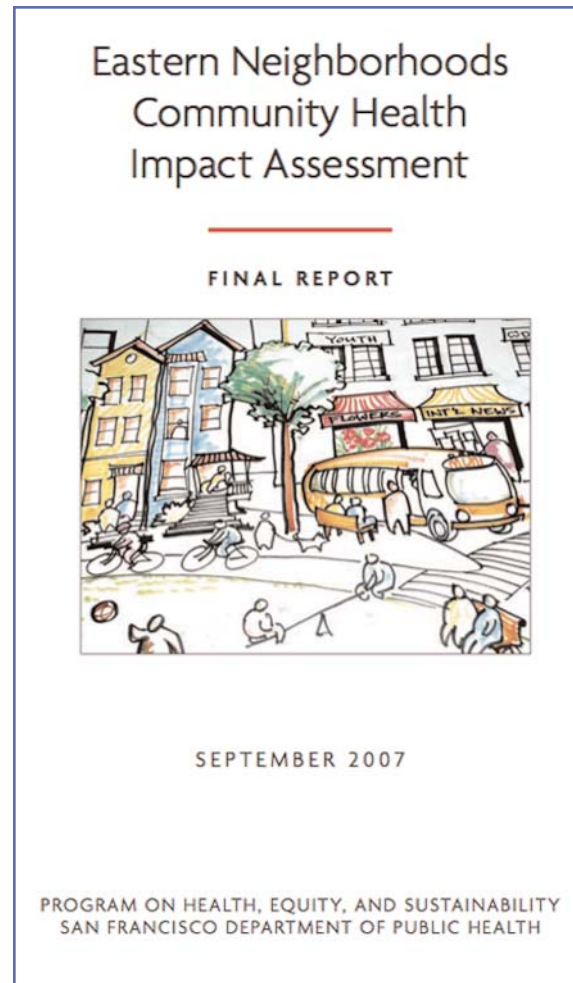
Eastern Neighborhoods Community Health Impact Assessment

One of the most successful examples of an HIA process is the Eastern Neighborhoods Community Health Impact Assessment (ENCHIA, sfphes.org/ENCHIA.htm). The ENCHIA process assessed the health impacts of a proposed re-zoning and community planning process in San Francisco's Eastern Neighborhoods.

The City of San Francisco launched a community planning process, focusing on rezoning its Eastern Neighborhoods — the Mission, South of Market, Potrero Hill, Bayview/Hunters Point and others — to address land-use conflicts resulting from the lack of neighborhood plans to drive cohesive development. Public health officials were concerned about the rapid growth of housing demand in San Francisco which often resulted in a lack of affordable housing, evictions and overcrowding. At the same time, light-industrial businesses were being forced to relocate out of the city, taking blue-collar jobs with them.

The City rezoned many light industrial areas for market-rate residential uses, but without guiding neighborhood plans, there were limited opportunities for community members to participate in decision-making processes that affected them, rather than just react to possible negative impacts of proposed development projects.

After the City released Eastern Neighborhoods rezoning options, community stakeholders organized to address concerns with the project's environmental review under CEQA. Assessment of many social and economic impacts was not required under CEQA, and community stakeholders had significant concerns about these impacts, including direct health effects such as displacement, stress and noise, and indirect effects on health assets

Eastern Neighborhoods Community Health Impact Assessment

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2007

PROGRAM ON HEALTH, EQUITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY
SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

such as jobs, infrastructure and housing. In response, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) proposed to conduct an HIA parallel to the rezoning's accompanying land-use planning and environmental review processes.

ENCHIA was facilitated and staffed by SFDPH, and guided by a multi-stakeholder Community Council with more than 20 community-based and other organizations representing diverse interests for economic and neighborhood development, environmental justice, homelessness, open space, property owners and small businesses.

ENCHIA resulted in the inclusion of health-protective language into the Eastern Neighborhoods Area Plans; a comprehensive health analysis of the plans during their environmental review process; and new city legislation that requires air-quality and noise mitigations for sensitive land uses.

It also led to the creation of the Healthy Development Measurement Tool, a comprehensive set of evaluation and planning tools that bring health considerations into urban development. The tool was recently relaunched as the Sustainable Communities Index (sustainablesf.org).

The ENCHIA project faced many challenges, including a lengthy timeline and some participant attrition, stakeholder demands for SFDPH advocacy (despite limited SFDPH power within the City planning process), and other difficulties intrinsic to any political process.

Overall, however, ENCHIA boasts considerable net successes. It increased community awareness about the connection between health and land use. It also fostered strategic relationships between SFDPH and diverse neighborhood and advocacy organizations.

Through a consensus process, ENCHIA also created and mobilized the community around the Healthy Development Measurement Tool, which incorporated the values of environmental stewardship, sustainable transportation, public safety, public infrastructure and access to goods and services, adequate and healthy housing, a healthy economy, and community participation.

The final report, "Eastern Neighborhoods Community Health Impact Assessment," contains more information about the project. Written by the SFDPH's Lili Farhang and Rajiv Bhatia, it was published in 2007 by the SFDPH Program on Health, Equity and Sustainability.

For More Information

➤ Human Impact Partners (humanimpact.org) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the places and public policies that people need to live healthy lives. Their primary tool is the HIA. Through training, technical assistance and research, they assist organizations and public agencies that work with low-income communities to understand the health effects of current or proposed projects and policies. They also help communities use this information to take action. Their website contains comprehensive information on HIAs, including how to do them, potential uses, and possible sources of funding.

➤ "A Health Impact Assessment Toolkit: A Handbook to Conducting HIA." Third Edition. Human Impact Partners, February 2001.

➤ "Guidance and Best Practices for Stakeholder Participation in Health Impact Assessments – Version 1.0." Prepared by the Stakeholder Participation Working Group of the 2010 HIA of the Americas Workshop, March 2012.

➤ The SFDPH Program on Health, Equity and Sustainability (sfphes.org/resources/hia-tools) currently offers HIA Trainings for under $1,000. The course provides current and future HIA practitioners with experience using available procedures, regulations and tools to implement an HIA.
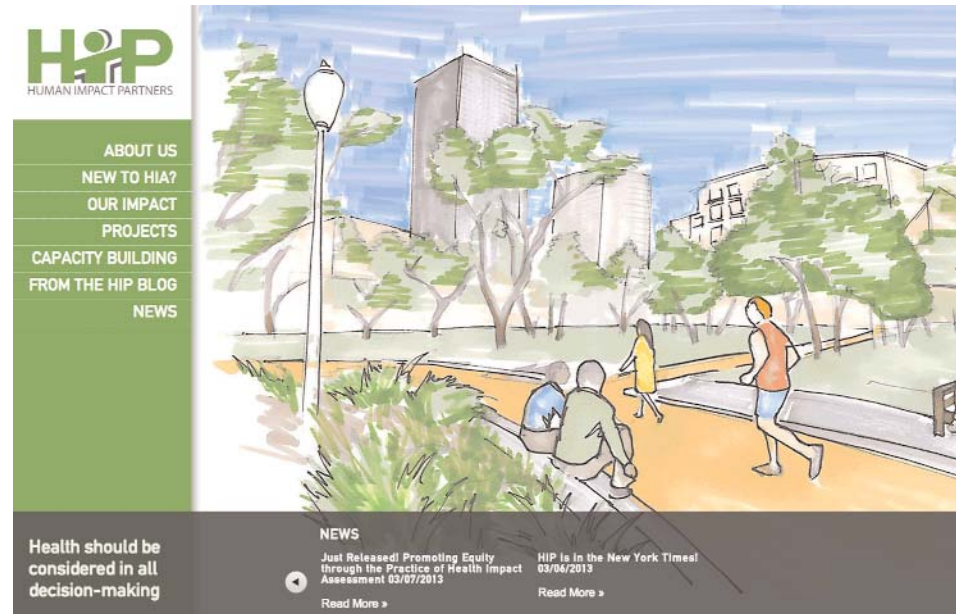
Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process where community members directly decide how to spend part of the public budget. It is an alternative to conventional public budgeting, which is conducted solely by elected officials and government staff.

The Participatory Budgeting Project, a nonprofit organization, reports the process was first developed in Brazil in 1989, and there are now over 1,500 participatory budgets around the world. Most of these are at the city level, for the municipal budget.

Participatory budgeting has also been used, however, for counties, states, housing authorities, schools and school systems, universities, coalitions and other public agencies.

Though each experience is different, most follow a similar basic process: residents brainstorm spending ideas; trained volunteer budget delegates develop proposals based on these ideas; residents vote on proposals; and the government implements the top projects.

For example, if community members identify recreation spaces as a high priority, their delegates might develop a proposal for a playground or ball field. The residents would then vote on this option and other proposals. If they approve the project, the city pays to develop it.

PB Vallejo

The City of Vallejo reports that, in 2012, its City Council established the first citywide participatory budgeting process in the United States, where residents directly decided how to spend a portion of the city budget. In June 2013, as part of the FY 2013-2014 budget process, the City Council approved an allocation of approximately $2.4 million for the second cycle of PB Vallejo.

Through participatory budgeting, Vallejo residents and stakeholders develop project proposals, residents vote on projects, and the list of the projects that receive the most votes are submitted to the City Council for consideration.

The process involves a series of meetings that feed into the city's annual budget cycle. Alongside these face-to-face meetings, the public can submit, review and discuss project ideas online.

A steering committee oversees the participatory budgeting process, which includes designing the rules, planning public meetings, and conducting outreach with diverse communities. Members work with City staff to ensure that PB Vallejo is transparent, fair and inclusive.

The committee has 21 members, including a minimum of 14 local civic organizations and a maximum of seven individual, or at-large, members. Committee members serve for two cycles of Vallejo's participatory budgeting process (approximately two years).

A timeline of what happens includes:

■ Budget Assemblies: January-February 2014

At community meetings across the city, PB Vallejo and City staff present information on the budget, and Vallejo residents and stakeholders meet in small groups to brainstorm project ideas and volunteer as budget delegates.

■ Delegate Meetings: March-August 2014

Delegates complete an orientation process and meet in committees to transform the community's initial project ideas into full proposals, with support from experts. Delegates submit final project proposals to the City for review.

■ Project Expos: September 2014

Delegates return to the community in another round of community meetings to present final project proposals to the community.

■ Voting: October 2014

Residents vote on which projects to fund. The projects with the most votes will be presented to the City Council for consideration.

■ Evaluation and Monitoring: November 2014-onward

Delegates and other participants evaluate the process and monitor the implementation of projects.

PB Vallejo's Goals

The City hopes to accomplish four main goals through PB Vallejo:

1. Improve the city.

➤ Improve the city's infrastructure, assist in enhancing the public safety of citizens, and improve the quality of life for residents by creating projects without using Measure B funds for salary expenses.

➤ Build a new spirit of civic pride and raise Vallejo's profile on the regional, state and national levels.

2. Engage the community.

➤ Ensure that all members of the community have a voice.

➤ Engage those who are traditionally underrepresented in politics, who face obstacles to participating, or who feel disillusioned with the political process.

➤ Increase public involvement in civic life in Vallejo.

3. Transform its democracy.

➤ Empower Vallejoans with the skills and knowledge they need to shape their city's future.

➤ Build leadership from the bottom up and forge deeper ties between residents, neighborhoods and communities.

4. Open up government.

➤ Increase the transparency and accountability of local government to community stakeholders.

➤ Improve communication and collaboration between local government and the community.

➤ Support a framework within government for decision-making that promotes a more just and equitable city.

To learn more: pbvallejo.org

For More Information

The Participatory Budgeting Project (participatorybudgeting.org) is a nonprofit organization that empowers communities to make informed, democratic and fair decisions about public spending and revenue, by providing technical and other assistance in developing and administering the participatory budgeting process. Their website provides helpful information about methods, implementation, history and case studies.

Low-Cost Demonstrations and Transformations

Community-led demonstration projects enable residents and stakeholders to participate in relatively inexpensive temporary transformations to test and experience changes. Sometimes referred to as "placemaking," "tactical urbanism" or simply "pilot projects," there is a growing number of examples across the nation. Sample projects include:

➤ Converting street edges to provide enhanced bikeways.

➤ Turning on-street parking spaces into outdoor seating areas ("parklets").

➤ Adding chairs and other street furniture on sidewalks or in parking spaces.

➤ Converting vacant lots to community gardens and play lots.

➤ Improving blank walls and empty spaces with public art and colorful murals.

Changes are often installed with local donated or recycled materials, supplies and volunteer labor. Ideas are tested with chalk guns, temporary paint, movable planters and homemade chairs and benches. The process builds connections, creates civic engagement, and empowers citizens. The physical projects create opportunities for people to meet their neighbors.

Temporary projects can have a significant impact and help both the community and local officials envision a new future for a place. City officials can use temporary zoning and provide technical guidance to ensure adequate safety and operations, allowing community members to "break" rules to explore permanent regulatory changes. These grace periods help

Temporary markings helped Livingston see a midblock crosswalk, a roundabout and bike lanes.

foster innovation by residents, while enabling officials to evaluate the success of practices before making higher-cost, more permanent changes.

Main-Street Transformation in Livingston

The Local Government Commission and the California Chapter of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CCNU) volunteers helped the City of Livingston (Merced County, CA) temporarily transform the town main street into a more walkable, bicycle-friendly place. High-school students and local union carpenters constructed several "tactical urbanism" demonstration projects as part of

a multi-day design charrette, including a midblock crosswalk, a roundabout, sidewalk chairs, bicycle lanes and a pop-up cafe.

The LGC partnered with the City to secure a Caltrans Transportation Planning Grant that helped pay for the effort. CCNU volunteer professionals provided their talents and labor pro bono.

Intersection Repair in Portland

City Repair, a nonprofit organization in Portland, OR, works with residents to convert street intersections into public squares. Intersections remain open to cars but are transformed so that drivers move slowly and expect pedestrians. Examples of

improvements include murals, painted streets, installation of kiosks and community bulletin boards, and reconstruction of intersections with special paving materials.

A group of neighbors start the idea, get their community involved, create a design, and install changes. City Repair helps community volunteers at no charge to navigate the process, work with their neighbors, connect with skilled people, and raise funds. Neighbors cover the cost of project expenses, such as paint and materials. City Repair also helps the group meet City requirements.

Download the Portland City Ordinance that allows for intersection repair paintings and tips on painting logistics: cityrepair.org/about/howto/placemaking/intersectionrepair

For More Information

Project for Public Spaces (pps.org), a New York City-based nonprofit, provides training, education and how-to resources on ways to engage the community in planning, shaping and transformation of public spaces.

Another good resource about the temporary use of spaces through "pop-up events" is the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative – the home of Kent State University's urban design graduate program and the public-service activities of its College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

"Pop Up Rockwell" was a one-week experiment in April 2012 to test complete- and green-street improvements along downtown Cleveland's Rockwell Avenue. The temporary street transformation explored fresh ideas for making the street more walkable and bike-friendly, allowing people to directly experience a future vision of the city and provide feed-back before large financial and political investments are made. For "Pop Up City" and "Temporary Use Handbook:" cudc.kent.edu/pop_up_city

"Tactical Urbanism 2," by the Street Plans Collaborative, provides an overview of tactical urbanism and 24 examples of types of projects and places where they are being used around the country: issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final

▲ Tactical urbanism on Main Street: Mockups of a pop-up cafe and street furniture at the Livingston charrette.

▲ A painted street in Portland's Belmont neighborhood, along with a metal sidewalk sculpture that reiterates the design.

Chapter 3.
Tools for Engagement: In the Room

Numerous methods of engaging residents in the planning process were introduced in the previous chapter. This chapter provides a closer look at techniques, activities and exercises that can be deployed in a single event or a series of events, or can support an ongoing planning process.

Running Meetings

Public-participation planning projects will require some level of event facilitation by one or more people depending upon the type of meeting and activities. It is important to seek out facilitators who are engaging. Will the facilitator or co-facilitators be able to relate to the demographic, linguistic and cultural characteristics of the participants? Is there an opportunity to involve a well-known speaker who can attract a higher turnout and inspire robust participation?

Another important and too-often overlooked step to ensure meaningful and productive participation is developing a strategically designed, well-crafted process agenda in advance that identifies the event's purpose and objectives, and the steps during the event to meet those goals.

The use of a facilitator who doesn't have a direct stake in the outcome can help different groups resolve complex issues. A facilitated process can be sponsored by an agency or organization to resolve a complicated, multi-party conflict, such as a project in an environmentally sensitive area.

A facilitator can fill various roles, based on the reasons stakeholders have been brought together. At a minimum, a facilitator is a neutral and trusted person who ensures that discussions are respectful, organized and productive. The facilitator uses meeting management techniques to help guide the discussions and ensure that all participants have an equal and secure opportunity to communicate their perspectives.

In addition to the task of managing a meeting, an appropriately trained and experienced facilitator can also take a more advanced role of helping participants discuss and resolve problems through collaborative, interest-based methods.

In a facilitated group process, community stakeholders — and often city/county staff — participate in an effort to find a mutually acceptable solution, or identify common needs, goals and opportunities. A diversity of community viewpoints is sought to ensure a full airing of all relevant issues. In community planning, facilitated processes have been used successfully to resolve tough land-use decisions, and helped define mutually acceptable solutions to previously gridlocked situations.

Facilitation invites or identifies someone seen as fair by all the parties to help the group engage in constructive problem-solving. The facilitator can be a consultant, an elected official, a staff member, or even a member of the participating group, as long as the individual has facilitation skills and the group's trust. The facilitator guides the process and helps the group move toward agreement.

Facilitators use a variety of meeting management techniques:

➤ Help develop and adhere to ground rules to keep communication focused and productive in achieving the meeting and group objectives.

➤ Monitor group progress and timekeeping.

➤ Focus on the needs and aspirations of participants, and steer them from personal positions and feelings about topics and/or others in the group.

➤ Ensure everybody has the opportunity to speak.

➤ Ensure that all concerns are fully addressed.

➤ Identify themes and areas of agreement and disagreement.

➤ Guide the group's brainstorming activities.

➤ Record the group's discussion.

➤ Encourage collaboration.

Success in a facilitated process is usually attained when:

➤ There is a broad participation by all parties with a major interest in the issue.

➤ Each participant helps define the problem, as well as opportunities and assets.

➤ All participants share responsibility for educating one another about their perceptions and concerns about the situation.

➤ A full range of alternatives are considered.

➤ Participants share responsibility for developing solutions and implementation strategies.

Facilitated processes bring together a range of stakeholders to find common ground, design feasible solutions, and work together to identify common visions and opportunities — and define and solve problems. Unlike many conventional decision-making patterns that foster rivalry between different groups, facilitation is used to resolve conflict, and save valuable time and energy by acknowledging the validity of each party's concerns.

It allows participants to reach a solution that — while not always the first choice of each party involved — can nevertheless be agreed to by all involved. These solutions are usually more durable than the first choices of each party because the solutions reflect the interests of all parties involved.

Interest-based negotiation is a problem-solving method that can inform effective facilitation. This process of negotiation to solve problems aims at satisfying mutual needs, rather than one party's positions at the expense of other needs. It focuses on needs and issues to be resolved, rather than positions or personalities, and looks for win-win solutions.

The book "Getting to Yes" is a classic primer on interest-based negotiation, and is recommended reading for anyone attempting facilitation at any level.

Guides such as "The Facilitator's Fieldbook" and "The Skilled Facilitator" provide comprehensive references to methods and techniques to support facilitation efforts.

Another tool that can inform effective facilitation is Nonviolent Communication, which is based on nonviolent principles that can be effective in addressing controversial issues without judgment or blame. Like interest-based negotiation, it approaches deliberation in terms of needs. Nonviolent Communication is a particularly effective tool in interest-based negotiation.

For More Information

➤ Common Ground Center for Cooperative Solutions: extension.ucdavis.edu/commonground

➤ The Center for Collaborative Policy: csus.edu/ccp

➤ International Association of Facilitators: iaf-world.org

➤ International Association for Public Participation: iap2.org

➤ The Institute of Cultural Affairs: ica-usa.org

➤ Justice, Thomas, and David W. Jamieson, Ph.D. "The Facilitator's Fieldbook." New York, NY: AMACOM Books, 2012.

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➤ "Without Giving In." New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991.

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Asking for Feedback

Brainstorming and polling techniques during a meeting provide visible collective input, which informs the planning effort while educating participants about other community stakeholders' concerns and aspirations.

Here are a few techniques:

Hand-Raising. Hand-raising provides quick results and can be used to gauge the mood, receptiveness and sense of consent or disagreement, shared thinking or comprehension, and the level of engagement in the room. However, it's not readily quantifiable if there are more than about 30 workshop partici-pants and can become tedious if used more than a few times during a workshop.

Vision Cards. Participants are asked at the beginning of an event to write down their vision for their neighborhood or community in one to two sentences on index cards. After approximately five minutes, participants are invited to read their cards out loud (usually limited to about five readings).

This activity has several benefits. First, the people in the room — the residents and stakeholders — have the first word about their hopes and aspirations for their community. Second, starting out with visions for the future instead of problems to address sets a positive tone for the meeting. And hearing a few ideas out loud exposes fellow community members to visions they may share and possibilities they may not have thought of before.

Value Clusters. Participants are asked to write in one or two words on Post-it notes what they like about their community.

After a few minutes, they are asked to place each note on a wall next to other notes using the same or similar words. Clusters of common values emerge that are visible to participants and that can be counted and photographed to help guide the planning effort. As with the case of the vision cards, this activity helps to focus attention on what people agree upon and hold in com-mon, versus areas of disagreement.

Brainstorming. Brainstorming uses the group's collective intellectual resources by allowing participants to generate ideas without stopping for discussion, evaluation, judgment or lengthy description. Ideas are called out randomly as "popcorn" or in "round robin," where participants take turns sharing ideas until they have no more ideas or run out of time.

Ideas are recorded on a flip chart by one or more of the partici-pants, or a group facilitator. Ideas generated can be prioritized, evaluated and/or refined later.

Sticky Dots. Sticky dot polling provides quick, visible results that can be photographed or saved after the workshop for refer-ence. In sticky dot polling, answer choices, options or alternatives

are presented on poster boards, easel pads or butcher sheets, and participants are given dots to place on their preferred answer choice. In a workshop setting, the list of options or issues can be developed through a rapid brainstorming process in which participants throw out ideas for issues to address or potential solutions to explore.

Sticky dot polling can help prioritize choices in a number of ways. Items might be prioritized by how many users place sticky dots on a given choice. Participants can be given more dots than choices, with an equal number of dots for each user, so that they can place more dots on a given item to communi-cate the importance of that choice. Or they can be given a smaller number of dots and instructed to place only one dot vote per item. Asking participants to spread the dots one per choice over several possibilities makes them identify more than one solution, thus encouraging single-issue residents to consider the bigger picture.

Results are quantifiable, and they are also quickly and visibly evident to workshop participants. Large clusters of dots around
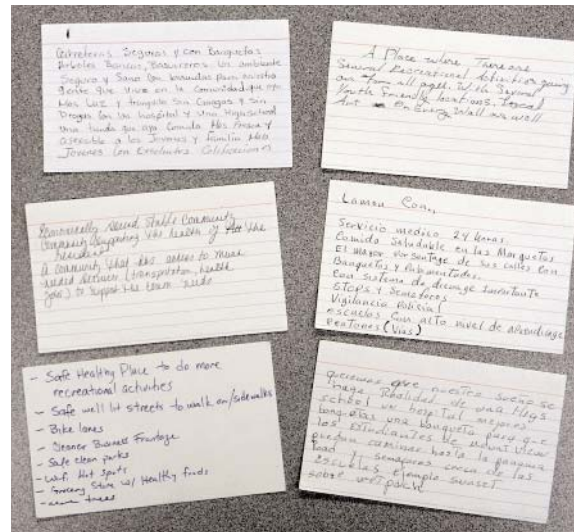
popular choices give participants graphical information about community input and feedback.

Card Polling. Card polling is another way to help participants choose between sets of options or alternatives. Like sticky dot polling, card polling provides quick, visible results for minimal cost, and results can be photographed or saved after the workshop for reference.

In card polling, questions about the planning topic are written on poster boards or butcher paper taped on a wall. Participants are given cards that will stick to the surface and are color-coded with different answers for each question. Participants place selected cards near questions written on the surface.

Card polling is helpful when sets of policy options are mutually exclusive — for example, land-use alternatives for general plans. Different colors for each answer might represent different policy alternatives. For simpler questions, such as gauging satisfaction with transit service in a given area, colors might be red, yellow and green to represent negative, neutral and positive responses.

Again, results are quickly and visibly evident to workshop participants. Large clusters of cards around popular choices give participants graphical information about community input and feedback. Large clusters of red cards might indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with local transit service.

Audience Response Systems. Audience Response Systems are also known as Personal Response Systems or, more informally, hand-held clicker systems. With these systems, workshop participants use wireless clickers to answer multiple-choice questions presented on a screen, with their collective answers appearing on the screen almost immediately.

Collective answers can appear in a variety of forms, including a listing of the number of clicks per answer choice. Systems can be plugged into most standard presentation software, such as PowerPoint. Answers can be given anonymously, and are quantifiable and instantly visible.

One drawback is the system's cost. Systems for purchase or even rent can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars, depending on the number of clickers needed. However, some local jurisdictions, metropolitan planning organizations and regional councils of governments may have systems that can be borrowed or rented by local planning departments or community-based organizations.

Questionnaires. Response sheets or comment cards provided at the end of the workshop collect additional input that participants may not have thought of or didn't have the opportunity to express during the workshop.

The benefits of this technique are that it is anonymous, and also allows commentary beyond a finite number of choices. It is also low-tech and low-cost.

The drawback is that written results are time-consuming to record, and results are not readily visible and quantifiable during the community workshop. Participants might also not be willing to hang around at the end of a workshop to complete a questionnaire, especially if it's not a very short one.

For any of these techniques, remember to make questions user-friendly. Use clear, unambiguous language without jargon or acronyms. Try to keep language neutral to avoid biasing responses (for example, avoid qualifiers).

Avoid double-barreled questions — multiple questions combined into one. An example would be "How do you rate our city's garbage collection service and parking enforcement services?" Respondents may rate the two services differently, and this question should actually be two questions, one assessing trash collection, and the other assessing parking enforcement.

Focus Groups

These meetings allow small groups of stakeholders to provide their knowledge of a project area and discuss their concerns and issues with community-based organizations, local government staff and planning consultants.

Each group is focused around a specific segment of stakeholders. Typical select groups include: local elected officials and staff, regional and state agencies, transit providers, emergency responders, retailers, employers and property owners, environmental groups, neighborhood leaders, faith-based groups and community-service providers, and individuals and interest groups who represent particular segments of the population, such as seniors, people with disabilities or non-English speakers.

Sessions last from 60 to 90 minutes each, with approximately 6 to 12 participants. Extra time may be needed for groups over 15 people. Room layout and equipment is simple. A small group of tables are pulled together for people to sit around. As focus group sizes change each hour more tables are added or taken out. A large map can be placed on the table so that people can refer to places they want to discuss.

Focus groups are all about listening. Facilitators take steps to make sure each person around a table gets a chance to say what is most important to them or the organization, association, interest group or population segment they represent. No one dominates, especially the facilitator, who simply asks guided open-ended questions like "why do people choose to live in this neighborhood," or "what is the single most important issue we must address for this to be a successful effort."

Facilitators listen and sometimes ask follow-up questions on important issues. A recorder takes accurate bullet-point statements, usually without names attributed to comments to preserve anonymity and encourage candor.

Focus groups are most useful in the early phases of a planning effort or the first days of a charrette to surface issues that might not otherwise come up in a public setting. They offer a way to collect information that might not be available in planning documents and hear candid perspectives from specific segments of stakeholders.

They are also a good way to engage hard-to-reach populations who are reticent or unable to attend a public workshop.

Finally, the meetings help to identify sensitivities and avoid unnecessary setbacks in advance of public events.

To learn more about using focus groups for better community planning, check out this classic and accessible primer: "Focus Groups: A Practical Guide For Applied Research," 4th edition, by R.A. Krueger and M.A. Casey. New York: SAGE, 2008.

Participatory Mapping

Participatory mapping engages community members in geographic mapping of their community's assets, needs, opportunities and other considerations to inform the community planning process. Community assets could include schools, parks, popular gathering places or sites of historical or cultural significance. Needs that could be mapped might be areas that lack sidewalks, have unsafe street crossings or other infrastructure deficiencies. Mappable opportunities could be a desired route to school, park or stores, or an ideal location for a grocery store that provides neighborhood access to fresh, healthy food.

A common form of participatory mapping involves a large photo aerial map of the community for workshop participants to write or draw on with color marking pens. Maps should include street names, school locations and other features that help participants locate themselves, and explain the particular purpose of the mapping activity.

Participants might also mark maps with sticky dots, color-coded to represent different needs, assets or preferences. For example, areas perceived as pedestrian hazards might be marked with red dots, while perceived community assets such as favorite meeting places get green dots.

They can also use pre-made cut-outs, from sticky construction paper or other materials, to represent different land uses and features such as retail stores, parks, residential neighborhoods and transit centers.

Workshops that include participatory mapping generally require a facilitator with technical expertise in the topic. This person

might be an urban designer, a community planner or a professional facilitator.

Typically, the key facilitator divides the participants into smaller breakout groups, each with their own map to mark. Or map stations are set up that participants can circulate to, with a different map focusing on different areas or issues at each station. The maximum group size recommended per map is eight people.

Formal table facilitators can be assigned, but the Local Government Commission has been very successful in allowing natural leadership to emerge. Planning, architecture and engineering professionals can, however, float between tables, answering questions and listening to the discussion. This helps empower participants to develop their own ideas with guidance instead of domination by experts.

Approximately 40 minutes to one hour is generally enough time for groups to discuss and mark up maps if all groups are working on maps of the same area. More time might be needed if people rotate to stations with maps of different areas or where they are asked to focus on different issues. Participants then

hear what their neighbors think at the end of the activity when each table reports back to the larger workshop group. Depending on the number of tables, groups are given 5 to 15 minutes each to present their findings.

Common map sizes range from 2'x3' to 4'x5' at a scale of 1:50, 1:100, 1:200 or larger, depending on the size of the study area. If an aerial photomap is not available, other maps such as conventional street maps can work, but aerial photomaps provide far more visual reference and details about constraints and opportunities, and help users identify where sites are located.

City and County planning departments, regional councils of governments, or metropolitan planning organizations can often generate these photomaps for community use.

Mapping activities in small groups maximizes the exchange of ideas and tends to reduce contentiousness by focusing attention on physical design issues. Where disagreement arises, specific issues and tradeoffs can be more easily identified and resolved more effectively. The resulting maps with participant markings, especially when presented in a visual summary (e.g., in

PowerPoint), help direct public officials and consultants toward solutions that respond to community needs.

Participatory mapping is one of the activities that can be conducted at a community workshop or design charrette. It can also be combined with walkability assessments, so participants can work together to map barriers and opportunities for walking, bicycling and traffic calming, which they have identified during a guided walking tour of their community (see the Walkability Assessments section in Chapter 4).

For More Information

➤ The Local Government Commission's Center for Livable Communities: lgc.org/freepub/community_design/ participation_tools/landuse_mapping.html

➤ "Stakeholder Engagement Strategies for Participatory Mapping." National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coastal Services Center, 2009. csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/_/ pdf/participatory-mapping.pdf

➤ The National Park Service's guide to group mapping: nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/Toolbox/ gatinfo_mapping.htm

➤ PolicyLink's community mapping toolkit: policylink.org/site/ c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136917/k.AB67/Community_Mapping.htm

Big Map for Active Transportation

In California, the City of Albany adopted the "Albany Active Transportation Plan" in 2012, which includes the City's first Pedestrian Master Plan and an update to its Bicycle Master Plan.

The consultant charged with developing the plan used a unique participatory mapping activity at a workshop to stimulate public engagement. The purpose of the workshop was to gather feedback from residents on existing barriers to walking and bicycling, desired facilities and preferred support programs.

Attendees recorded their comments on City maps, which included a 20-foot by 8-foot floor aerial that people of all ages could walk on and make detailed comments and markings on the large-scale, easy-to-see features of their city (see the set of photos at the bottom of the next page).

City staff, Transportation Advisory Committee members and the consultant team were available to interact directly with attendees.

More than 45 residents attended the workshop, which was also summarized in the Albany Patch, a local online daily news magazine.

▲ **Mapping the community's future: Small maps on tables inside and outdoors…**

▲ **…or sticky dots for maps on walls.**

floor-map photos: Fehr & Peers

…Big maps on floors…

…for people big and small.

Visual Preference Surveys

Developed by A. Nelessen Associates, the Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS™) enables community members to evaluate physical images of natural and built environments. Tools like this one have been in use for a long time, but the VPS™ has refined and disseminated the method.

The VPS™ involves asking participants to view and evaluate a series of between 180 and 240 slides. These photos depict a wide variety of streetscapes, land uses and densities, site designs, roadways, building types, civic and public spaces, parking lots, parks and recreation areas, sidewalks, landscapes and open spaces. Participants view each slide and assign it a score according to their gut reaction to the image – whether they like it and whether they feel it is appropriate to their community.

Scoring is based on a scale of -10 to +10, with zero being neutral. For example, if a person likes the image a lot, the score may be +8; if they mildly dislike it, the score may be -3. Scores for all those viewing the slides are aggregated, and the average and mean are determined.

The results represent the collective opinion of survey participants. Knowing the results, community members can then analyze each image to determine what elements contribute to both the positive and negative ratings. Issues such as style, texture and landscaping are among the many characteristics reviewed.

As an educational tool, this method supplies valuable community input to the planning process by helping people define what they like and dislike about what they see around them. The method heightens community awareness about the tradeoffs

Score: **+3.0**   #20

Score: **-1.1**   #40

inherent in design and land use planning decisions. As a participatory device, the VPS™ enables community members to develop a common vision of the physical characteristics they would like to see in the future design of their community and informs them about the possibilities. It educates participants about design options and is often useful in overcoming fears about compact, mixed-use development.

Results from the VPS™ may be used to develop a Visual Plan, which summarizes what community members have stated are the most important issues related to planning and design in their community. The Visual Plan identifies options for future development and elaborates upon workable solutions to current problems. As a practical, working document, it may be used in guiding plan review, preparing a specific plan, or developing design guidelines.

The Local Government Commission has developed a simplified version of the VPS™ called the Community Image Survey (CIS), which consists of 40 to 60 slide images arranged in pairs with contrasting examples from a community's built and natural environment. The CIS can be used in a workshop setting to get

Image #5   Average: **+0.2**
Comments: Unattractive; Sterile; No character; Dominated by garages; Looks like low income housing

Image #25   Average: **+2.1**
Comments: More attractive; Parking rear loaded; Nice colors
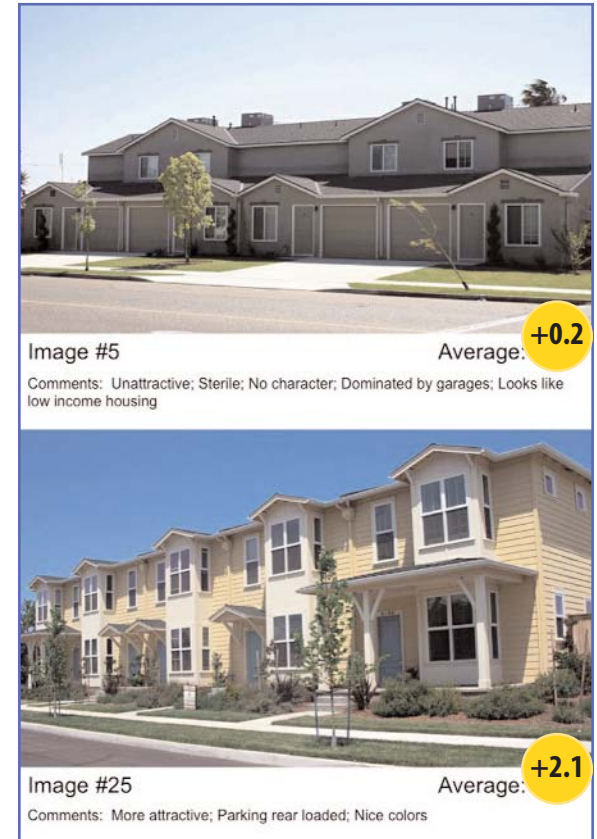
input from the community and engage people in a discussion about different development options. The survey is typically administered at the start of the workshop so that, while other activities take place, the facilitator can enter the results into a spreadsheet to determine the median score for each image.

Several hours later, the images can be shown again as pairs and with the median scores recorded for each image. Participants are asked to discuss what they liked or disliked about each image. The discussion that takes place not only provides useful input to policymakers but also helps residents better understand what they like and why they like it.

The LGC can prepare and administer a Community Image Survey tailored to a community's characteristics and needs; train local staff on how to prepare and administer a survey; and/or give advice on assembling and administering a survey.

Gualala Downtown Streetscape Plan

The Mendocino County community of Gualala, which boasts the Pacific Coast Highway as its main roadway, used a visual preference method as part of its Downtown Streetscape Plan to help address barriers to pedestrian travel and other circulation issues. The community's proximity to the coast is a major asset, but the presence of a highway right through the middle of town and limited pedestrian infrastructure was a barrier to pedestrian access.

Mendocino County is famous for its off-beat, quirky coastal communities; and while residents wanted safer, more comfortable pedestrian routes, there was suspicion of a perceived generic character associated with conventional curb, gutter and sidewalk construction.

"People do not come to Gualala because it is like every other suburb in California or because it is a Carmel...Let's not approve

a generic streetscape project that threatens to turn Gualala into Everytown, USA," voiced a stakeholder at one of the public comment periods.

Environmental concerns and buildout configurations along the coast also limit the width of the public right-of-way available for pedestrian and other transportation improvements.

Public engagement for the Mendocino Council of Governments' Gualala Downtown Streetscape Plan included a visual preference survey method to demonstrate a range of options for pedestrian travel improvements.

The resulting plan calls for a continuous network of pedestrian paths throughout the project area where none exist now, and new crosswalks. Pedestrian paths will reflect the "rural, casual,

coastal town character," without conventional curb, gutter and sidewalk configurations. Instead, pedestrian paths will be separated from the highway with garden strips with native plantings or bioswales, and include treatments so that they resemble native soils. Street lighting is called for only in select locations, to assure night sky protection, and solar-powered street lamps are encouraged.

To view the Downtown Streetscape Plan: mendocinocog.org

For More Information

➤ A. Nelessen Associates, Inc.: anelessen.com

➤ Local Government Commission: lgc.org/whatwedo/cis

Photo Visioning

P hotos of an existing condition can be digitally transformed to visualize proposed changes. Pictures are most often taken from the center of a street, or looking down a sidewalk, at an intersection or facing a building. Features like bike lanes, on-street parking, wider sidewalks, street trees and buildings are then digitally added or changed to show before and after conditions, often in a series of images depicting changes over time. Design elements may be added or subtracted from the image to help stakeholders visualize different alternatives.

Because it is often difficult to visualize from plan drawings what the actual "on-the-ground" result might look like, photo imaging can help community members better understand potential outcomes and provide more informed feedback.

As a mechanism to improve public communications about local planning and development issues, photo visioning can be used to help:

➤ Identify desired design qualities for building, sidewalks, streets, community spaces and neighborhoods.

➤ Evaluate proposed projects by creating images of the alternatives.

➤ Develop choices about the appearance of a project.

A growing number of planning, design and graphics consultants are gaining proficiency in photo visioning.

For Examples of Photo Visioning

➤ Urban Advantage: urban-advantage.com

➤ Clairvoyant Graphics: clairvoyantgraphics.com

A "before" photo on the left, with three visions of the same road on the right – adding a sidewalk, median landscaping, a bike lane (including a change of color), and finally a canopy of trees.

Tactile Tools

"**B**uilding" an urban solution is more accessible to many people than talking about it. Community planning methods involving building blocks or models have been used for a long time, but, in recent years, the Place It! project has refined and promoted this approach.

Place It! encourages communities around the world to be engaged in the urban planning process, and re-imagine their physical form. Interactive planning facilitates communication and fosters relationships between stakeholders, and uses two principal methods – interactive models or workshops.

Interactive models help people visualize their community and stimulate dialogue. To begin the exercise, a facilitator creates a physical, reduced-scale conceptual model of a community that includes streets, cultural landmarks, parks and natural features. The model is portable and can be placed at various locations.

It is designed to create a reaction from the public. Much like art, people can conceptually project themselves into the model.

During the activity, the facilitator leads participants through a 5-10 minute exercise where they build their solutions to various problems in their neighborhood by moving small buildings or objects within the model.

Objects in the model may be placed and replaced as participants wish, and this method creates a greater understanding of how built environments are imagined, created and experienced.

Stakeholders become physical participants in the creation and evolution of their built environment. Participants can be inter-

viewed during the activity, and moves recorded, for a record of input and feedback to inform the planning process.

The workshop method requires hundreds of small non-representative objects – often donated, found or purchased at thrift stores, they may include blocks, bottles, knobs and fasteners – to build models, construction paper to use as a base for their individual models, and enough tables and chairs to have four to five people at a table. Larger groups may require more people at a table, and a facilitator assigned to each table.

The workshop facilitator begins with a question to get people thinking, or to address a community aspiration or need. For example: How would you design a place for street vendors

in your community? What is your ideal city? What would encourage/allow you to walk in your community? The facilitator reassures the participants there are no limitations, and wrong or right answers. There doesn't need to be prior discussion or education about the topic.

Participants have 15-20 minutes to build a solution using their hands, minds, and thousands of small colorful, tactile objects. These objects are intended to trigger their connections to the built environment by helping them self reflect and articulate their solution. Once the time is up, the builders share their ideas through a one-minute, urban narrative/presentation to the larger group.

The final steps in the workshop are collaboration and synthesis. Participants divide into small groups to pool their ideas to create a new model, which incorporates the best ideas from each individual model. Results are shared and recorded through a large-group discussion at the end of the workshop.

Interactive planning methods have been used nationwide, as well as in Europe and at the United Nations Habitat-organized World Urban Forum in Brazil. Workshops typically cost under $500, while interactive models typically run less than $1,000.

Small Models, Big Ideas for Southern California

Place It! created the Long Beach Urban Utopia Project – the world's largest interactive city diorama, an 80 square-foot scale model of Long Beach – for community members to model their own vision of the city's future. The model was placed on a see-through platform, and could be viewed from above and below.

The project was hosted at a local art gallery, and implemented independently of the local planning department. Community members could visit the model anytime during gallery hours.

Diverse groups, including school children, homemakers and business owners, were able to work together to create community amenities, redesign parking, and reposition buildings.

An art project sponsored by the Museum of Latin American Art and the Long Beach Council for the Arts, it nevertheless demonstrates the potential of interactive planning methods to create community collaboration around urban design.

"Planning the Future of Our Streets" in Pasadena was an interactive planning workshop that enabled community members to create their own model of the perfect street. The event, sponsored by organizations representing local media, architects and community activists, began with an introduction by the mayor and educational presentations about the history and importance of pedestrian planning in the area — focusing on why more people don't choose to walk to nearby destinations.

Participants were asked to design their ideal street and sidewalk in 20 minutes, based on their personal experiences, using the interactive planning materials of tactile objects and construction paper. Participants were given rough criteria: How do they use the streets? What is the feel of the street? And what should the street look like? There were no scales, maps or pictures, and no wrong or right answers. The only requirement was that they create a three-dimensional model with the objects.

After the exercise, participants shared their models with the larger group. Results were synthesized and recorded, and are informing Pasadena's walkability planning process. This effort was sponsored by Southern California Public Radio and Los Angeles Streetsblog.

For More Information

➤ Place It! (placeit.org) is a project of the Latino Urban Forum, founded in 1999 by a group of urban planners and architects to establish a venue to address urban issues affecting Latino communities.

➤ "The City as Play" video: vimeo.com/11583278

Chapter 4.
Tools for Engagement: In the Field

Walking and talking in the places that people want to preserve or change takes the workshop to the street, so to speak. When groups of people observe places together, they often notice details and make discoveries that may not have occurred in an indoor workshop setting.

Walkability Assessments

Walkability assessments, also known as walking audits or walking workshops, are conducted with groups of residents and stakeholders of an area. These usually take one to two hours, but can last longer if needed. Planning and design experts lead the walk and ask those taking part "what is working here or not working here" at periodic stops.

Variations of walking assessments can use bicycling audits or bus tours with stops to cover broader areas.

Observing conditions together enables people to discuss common areas of interest or concern for the design, operations of streets, parks, public open space, security, safety, trails and other features of their neighborhood. When groups are diverse many insights are discovered. In some cases, problems are solved in the field.

To prepare for assessments organizers select routes that include the type of change needed in the neighborhood, town center, school, corridor or other location. Generally, a distance of a half-mile is sufficient. Assessments are not intended to be all-inclusive, but instead a solid sampling of key issues in the study area.

Other factors to consider in preparing for assessments include:

➤ **Size of the area.** For an entire city, large downtown, long transportation corridor or multiple neighborhoods, a bus can be used to visit distinct sites.

Smaller passenger buses or regular buses allow people to more easily hear one another and more quickly enter and exit at stops. A PA system allows facilitators to talk through topics between stops.

➤ **Group size.** Groups of 10 to 20 are ideal. Events with large numbers of participants usually require multiple groups, and enough facilitators to lead each group.

➤ **Include strollers and wheelchairs.** The most interesting walking assessments include a variety of participants to help everyone experience the exercise from multiple points of view. It is especially helpful when the group includes people who use wheelchairs, the visually impaired, parents with strollers and others who may face challenges in traversing a sidewalk, crosswalk or route to their destination.

Participants or facilitator assistants can be assigned to take notes on the walk. Cameras document the action as well as observations made by the group in the field.

Participants can use a walkability checklist to guide their findings. You can get several types of checklists from the Federal Highway Administration's "A Resident's Guide for Creating Safe and Walkable Communities" webpage: safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_cmnity/ped_walkguide/resource3.cfm

After the assessment, participants gather to de-brief what they saw. A participatory mapping activity often follows to further record problems, ideas and potential solutions.

The South Merced Martin Luther King, Jr. Way Revitalization Plan

The City of Merced used a walkability assessment and walkable community workshop, in combination with other methods, to help in its public outreach efforts with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Way Revitalization Plan that was funded by a Caltrans Environmental Justice Grant in 2009-10. The educational component of both activities helped inform the overall effort.

As a result of the community workshop, three of the residents who attended the event applied to be on the Citizens Advisory Committee.

For the walkability assessment and community workshop (facilitated by the Local Government Commission), the City of Merced partnered with the Merced County Association of Governments and Golden Valley Health Center.

The corridor is a primary gateway to Merced, but was characterized by aging buildings, strip commercial land uses, deteriorating infrastructure, and lack of aesthetic street features.

Many low-income residents living near the corridor don't own cars and walk or bike to get around. In spite of this, the area, which is a heavily traversed truck route, did not have a complete sidewalk system or bicycle facilities. Mothers pushing strollers, and senior citizens walking along the highway shoulder at rush hour, were a common sight.

The City embarked on its Martin Luther King, Jr. Way Revitalization Plan to improve these conditions and organized a variety of events where stakeholders could inform the corridor's improvement, identifying pedestrian and bicycle needs, as well as assets and opportunities. Plan organizers hosted booths at fairs, block parties and other community events for input and feedback;

and visited with stakeholder groups, including neighborhood, business and community organizations.

Plan organizers asked stakeholders to complete questionnaires at these events, and visited the project area over several days, asking pedestrians and bicyclists to complete questionnaires. A citizen's advisory committee collaborated in establishing implementation initiatives based on public input and technical assistance information. Some of them also volunteered their time to walk the project area, and ask pedestrians and bicyclists to complete the questionnaires.

The "Walkable Community Workshop," facilitated by Local Government Commission staff, included a walkability assessment that occurred early in the process, where its educational component could be most helpful. During the walkability assessment, an expert in designing for pedestrians guided participants in reviewing walking conditions in the area.

A 40-minute presentation on how to improve conditions for walking and bicycling was delivered before the walking tour. The last 90 minutes of the workshop included a design table exercise in which residents and stakeholders wrote their comments and ideas on aerial photos of the corridor, which helped direct future improvements.

These events helped educate some advisory committee members and other stakeholders about pedestrian and bicycle design principles, and ways to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles in safety and comfort along the corridor.

The workshop and assessment provided an on-site venue for stakeholders to identify what works, what doesn't, and how to improve conditions for pedestrians along the corridor. Participants identified specific short- and long-term actions

to improve community walkability, and areas that could use improved specific infrastructure features. The facilitator provided bilingual translation throughout the workshop.

The walkability assessment and workshop provided important input from residents to ensure that the revitalization plan — adopted by the Merced City Council in February 2012 — contained specific recommendations to make pedestrian and bicycle transportation safe, comfortable and convenient throughout the corridor. Less than a year after its adoption, some of the plan's sidewalk and safe crossing improvements are already being installed.

For More Information

➤ Walkability Assessment Providers: The Walkable and Livable Communities Institute (walklive.org) and the Local

Government Commission (lgc.org) both provide four-hour Walkable Community Workshops that include a walkability assessment, a community workshop and participatory mapping exercise for local jurisdictions and community-based organizations.

➤ Safe Routes to School (SRTS): SRTS assists communities in creating safe walking routes for children to public schools, and encourages more children to walk and bike to school. SRTS programs use some walkability assessment methods and techniques to assess the conditions on the route to school. The National Center for Safe Routes to School (saferoutesinfo.org) has information about walking/bike tours and audits.

➤ Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center: pedbikeinfo.org

➤ America Walks: americawalks.org

PhotoVoice

PhotoVoice is a tool for visual communication, where participants represent their community or point of view by taking photos, discussing them together, developing narratives to go with their photos, and conducting outreach or other action.

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program engaged youth in using the PhotoVoice technique to address health and built environments in California's San Joaquin Valley.

Local youth documented assets and challenges related to supporting or inhibiting access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity. They presented their findings at community forums of elected officials, city planners, teachers, doctors and other stakeholders. They also mobilized the development of community gardens where there were none and more walkable neighborhoods with traffic-calming measures.

Emerging themes from the project helped inform the need across the region for:

➤ Joint-use policies between schools and communities.
➤ Park renovations, installation of safe playground equipment, and operable drinking water fountains.
➤ Clean and unlocked restrooms at public recreational facilities.
➤ Safer neighborhoods and routes to and from school.
➤ Healthier food options in communities and schools.
➤ Reduced fast food and sugary drinks marketing.
➤ More produce markets in neighborhoods.
➤ Healthier foods that are more affordable.

For More Information

➤ ccropp.org/Photovoice.html
➤ photovoice.org

Edelmira, Age 17, Stockton, CA

PhotoVoice
Advocating for healthier communities through the lens and voices of youth

For this picture we have a playground in great condition that is locked and fenced. If children would like to go there they can't they would have to go find another playground or park that is farther away from where they live, This can be a problem because instead of the families walking to the park they have to drive a far distance, but this can become an obstacle for some families or children.

This fast food place is an example of the many other places there is available around this neighborhood. We try to prevent obesity by informing everyone how eating fast food on a daily basis can affect your health drastically. Many families are in such rush that they decide to go there for dinner, and we can change this by having more fruit and vegetables at home and in close by markets

This side walk is not only wide, but should keep pedestrians from walking into the street where they can put themselves into danger. This waste is in the way causing people to around it, or they might even trip over it. As part of this community I would recommend that we all work together to prevent this waste from getting to all the side walks. We can report this or take turns in cleaning this unsafe areas. We need to start now and work all together as one to set an example for the community.

Jacqueline, Age 16, Stockton, CA

PhotoVoice
Advocating for healthier communities through the lens and voices of youth

I see a hazard. There are cars parked on the sidewalk.
This is a challenge to being healthy and active.
This affects my life because it is annoying when I see cars and I cant even pass through with my bike.
People do not obey the laws because you cannot park your car on the sidewalk.
We can report them to the police officers.
I feel bad because they don't allow others to walk by safely.

I see graffiti on many of our park tables.
The tagging gives a negative effect to the park.
I would not want to play in this park.
This challenge exists because of gang members. We can report taggers to the police.
I feel angry that people tag on our beautiful equipment and they make it ugly.

I see an old, rusty, and unsanitary water faucet.
It is a challenge because we cant drink water at the park when we are thirsty.
This affects my life because I am always playing in the park and I am always thirsty.
The park maintenance staff are not taking proper care of our parks.
We can petition to get a new water fountain.
I feel disgusted because there must be a lot of parasites and diseases on this fountain.

Virtual Participation

Digital tools allow residents and stakeholders to provide planning input and feedback from personal computers and smart phones. In communities with widespread Internet access and use, online technologies provide an excellent complement to face-to-face activity. Where use and access is more limited, online tools may be less effective.

Any web-based engagement platform may limit participation by some residents. However, the rise of social networking and smart phones, along with the increase in applications available to facilitate resident input, will likely expand the viability of these tools in a growing number of communities in the years to come.

Online Participation Tools

Some online participation tools are open source, and therefore available for free. Others require a fee for downloading applications or access to the service. If a government agency or an organization sponsoring a planning effort buys a subscription to a tool or pays to join, it can customize the tool. Users (residents and stakeholders) can then access it for free to provide input and feedback.

Web-conferencing and audio-conferencing tools allow real-time collaboration, where users can join in at any time. A good tool will require minimal or no technical support, and conferencing can be set up in minutes. They can enable presentation of electronic materials on-screen.

A Crowdbrite website for encouraging and enabling public participation in the Civic Area Ideas Competition for Boulder, CO.

Some standard tools with varying capabilities include GoToMeeting.com, GoToWebinar.com, ReadyTalk.com and Webex.com.

MindMixer.com is an online public participation tool where stakeholders can submit ideas for general online discussion, vote or provide other feedback on ideas submitted by other users, and see data on user feedback on submitted ideas — all on their own schedule.

Surveys

Surveys are a useful supplement to some broader participation tools such as community workshops, and are often integrated into the process of some tools such as Health Impact Assessments.

Paper and phone surveys can require numerous hours to collect, confirm and compile results.

SurveyMonkey.com is a free, user-friendly online tool that can be used to design surveys and questionnaires. A digital link is sent out to the public or targeted groups to take the survey. The tool then tabulates and summarizes the results. Users can also pay to access additional features, including unlimited questions and responses, enhanced security, custom design and enhanced reporting.

Community Conversations

Applications like Nextdoor.com and LocalData (fastcodesign.com) are designed to foster community conversation around community issues.

LocalData allows users to report on conditions in their community, like sidewalk gaps or abandoned properties, and has other capabilities like questionnaire functionalities.

Nextdoor is a free, online platform for neighborhood-oriented social media; and social media, including Facebook and Twitter, are fun ways to generate discussion and get qualitative feedback on community issues.

Crowdbrite.com uses place-based visualization tools with professionals and the public, both online and in-person, to find solutions to complex problems. Crowdbrite works with personal computers, tablets and mobile phones, allowing users to add virtual sticky notes, pictures, video links and ideas to maps, simulations and other community-planning tools.

Because Crowdbrite allows users to provide input and feedback on digital maps, it enables a form of participatory mapping online. Through sticky notes and other brainstorming techniques, it can also facilitate the visioning process.

Crowdbrite adds some capabilities to these tools by allowing sticky notes to hold not only text, but also photos, videos, metrics, comments and other information, and by generating organized information from the sticky notes in the form of reports, spreadsheets, and marked maps or other graphics. It also supports a feedback loop by facilitating comments on comments, enabling quick response to user questions and concerns.

Importantly, Crowdbrite can be used in face-to-face, interactive community planning workshops, if loaded onto personal computers available for participant use. Small-group breakouts are ideal for Crowdbrite use at public workshops. Facilitators can record small-group input and feedback on Crowdbrite, and share them at the end of the workshop.

Crowdbrite has been used in numerous planning efforts, including the California Economic Summit, a project of the California Stewardship Network and California Forward (caeconomy.org), and Mobility 2035: Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan Update, the regional transportation planning effort for the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (tahoempo.org)

For More Information

There are numerous new applications — many available for free — that are designed for community engagement or can be tailored for a variety of public participatory planning efforts. Two websites that provide details and links to some of these tools:

➤ codeforamerica.org/apps

➤ citizenville.com/category/featured_apps

For online mapping tools:
➤ openplans.org/work

For an extensive list of tools with descriptions and evaluations:
➤ planningtoolexchange.org

Acknowledgements