



YOUTH-LED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT MODULE

A Collaboration Between
GPCOG, City of Portland, and Cultivating Community
with Technical Assistance support from Groundwork USA

January 26, 2017



Key Goals

Project Goals

- **Engage** diverse local Portland teens in collecting feedback from East Bayside residents frequently missing in planning process.
- **Train** the teens with “light touch” strategies that collect a representative cross-section of neighborhood voices and inform this planning process.
- **Present** this community feedback to GPCOG, City and the Brownfield AWP Advisory Committee.
- **Ensure** East Bayside’s voices are documented in the final Area Wide Plan, and will inform future strategies and action steps.

Desired Youth Outcomes

Youth Outcomes

- Learn about Brownfields; environmental justice; how to get feedback from community members
- Identify community events/venues; conduct approximately 100 feedback interviews in East Bayside
- Sort and analyze the information received in those conversations
- Learn skills in and practice presenting and public speaking
- Photo document their work
- Conduct presentation to GPCOG, City, AWP Advisory Committee, and local stakeholders and families

Why Cultivating Community?

Cultivating Community's mission: *To create and sustain greater access to healthy, local foods; empower people to play many roles in restoring the local, sustainable food system; and model, teach, and advocate for ecological food production.*

- Deep existing relationships, especially youth/immigrants and families living in Kennedy Park
- Local stakeholder (Boyd Street Farm) reclaiming contaminated land for community benefit
- Strong cultural competency helpful for ensuring a representative cross-section of neighborhood voices are part of this planning process



Getting Started: Foundational Learning

Students learned about brownfields.

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines brownfields as: *"real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."*
- In other words, any piece of land whose soil or groundwater contains (or MIGHT contain) contamination can be considered a brownfield.
- Much of the land in East Bayside can be considered a brownfield site (historically this area was low-lying tidal flats that were filled in with debris/soil from the city's Great Fire of 1866).

Getting Started: Foundational Learning

Students learned about getting feedback and why getting feedback from a representative sample of local residents is important in for informing development and changes in a neighborhood.

- EPA granted Portland funds to study East Bayside's brownfields, and to plan ways for reclaiming this land for community benefit.
- EPA recognizes that **Environmental Justice** (EJ) populations are burdened disproportionately by brownfield sites.
 - What do we mean by EJ populations?
 - People of color
 - Youth, elderly
 - Low/moderate-income neighborhoods
 - Areas of concentrated poverty
- So, EPA requires their grantees to reach all kinds of people/voices across the neighborhood to ensure that the expected wave of prosperity can be accessible to all, not just developers or property owners.

Collecting Feedback: Our Methodology

Students designed their engagement strategy and prepared to implement.

- We went out into the community and asked a series of questions.
 - The Advisory Committee supplied us with questions to ask.
- We recorded people's answers on Amazon Fires.
- How did we practice?
- What questions did we ask?
- How did we get people to engage with us?
- Who generated the questions? (Advisory Committee at their September 2016 meeting)



Collecting Feedback: Our Methodology

Students selected a number of locations at which to collect feedback.

- Root Cellar
- East End Community School
- Walked along Cumberland Avenue & Washington Avenue
- Coffee By Design (Diamond St)

Why?

- We identified places where Environmental Justice populations were more likely to be present.
- We chose locations where we could encounter people, to connect with people in their daily routine, rather than expecting them to come to us.

Results: What Did People Say?

Students gathered feedback from around 100 people.

- We estimate that 50% of these encounters were with residents of East Bayside.
- We asked 12 questions in total.
- Each respondent was asked 3 randomly selected questions.
- No one respondent was asked the same 3 questions.
- We asked questions this way to remain in keeping with federal law (cannot ask >9 people the same question without federal review/approval).

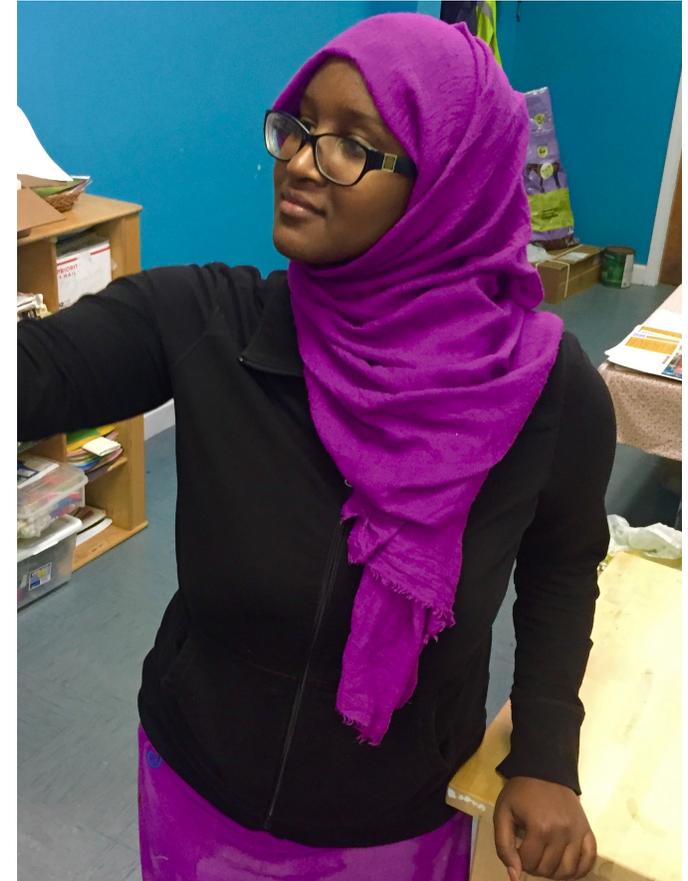
What's the upshot?

- People living in East Bayside love their community:
 - Its diversity
 - Its proximity to the ocean and downtown
- Gentrification (rising rents) and displacement are top of mind.
- People want:
 - Affordable housing
 - Recreational and non-motorized transit amenities
 - Jobs and job opportunities
- People want to be involved in things happening in East Bayside.

Project "Side Effects"

Students learned they:

- Are really good at explaining seemingly complicated things to people
- Are outgoing-- walking up to talk to people
- Enjoyed sharing their opinion and perspective with their team and the public
- Could work harder than they previously thought
- Found it easy to talk to people, even older folks and people they don't know
- Are good at taking notes and thinking on their feet



Conclusion: Lessons Learned

What worked well?

- Excellent opportunity to connect youth and local stakeholders
- “Teachable moment” opportunity for youth was profound:
 - Built confidence, new skills
 - Created community engagement capacity in City that didn’t exist before
 - New fee-for-service opportunity for Cultivating Community

What would’ve worked better? How?

- Taking advantage of CC’s early fall recruitment cycle would’ve allowed for implementation before winter.
- Winter weather prevented door-to-door encounters, and lessened the number of people walking around.
- Securing permissions to do tabling at identified locations took longer than anticipated.

Questions, Next Steps, Things to be Explored...

- How can we ensure that East Bayside residents of ALL identities are reached?
 - This team could replicate this process in the springtime
 - Could go door-to-door
 - Easy to replicate now that pilot is complete
- In response to what people said, what should program planning and implementation look like? Who will lead it?
- Can we create **shared leadership roles** that include residents AND people paid to do this kind of work?