



Portland, Maine  
Direct Technical Assistance Final Report  
March 1, 2017

**Client:** Greater Portland (Maine) Council of Governments (GPCOG)  
**Project:** EPA-funded East Bayside Brownfield Area-Wide Planning (BF AWP) Project  
**Focus Area:** East Bayside neighborhood - Portland, ME  
**Scope:** Design, Delivery, Support of “Neighborhood Voices” Community Engagement Strategy

### Overview

In late 2016 and early 2017, GPCOG partnered with local community based non-profit Cultivating Community to support the engagement of a teen cohort who gathered input from stakeholders in the East Bayside neighborhood on behalf of the East Bayside Brownfield AWP project team. In response to the grant management team’s request, the cohort sought community input on how and in what ways cleanup and reuse of brownfield sites could benefit the East Bayside community most. The teen cohort reported out their findings from these pop-up encounters with a presentation to the East Bayside Brownfield AWP Advisory Committee, which GPCOG convened on January 26, 2017.

### Methodology & Approach

In late fall 2016, following Groundwork USA’s coaching and support of a partnership development process, the “Neighborhood Voices” teen cohort of 7 Portland teenagers was trained and coached, by staff at Cultivating Community and members of the Groundwork USA Direct Technical Assistance Team, to lead a series of “pop up” community engagement encounters that took place at 7 high-traffic locations across the neighborhood during December 2016 and January 2017. A total of 12 questions developed by the East Bayside Brownfields AWP Advisory Committee formed the basis for short conversations with East Bayside stakeholders about opportunities and needs present in and around East Bayside. Armed with these questions, cohort members used an “interactive game” methodology to ensure each interviewee was offered a random selection of 3 of the 12 questions, in keeping with federal requirements tied to EPA funding. 103 people were interviewed by cohort members in short 5-minute feedback conversations, each of which consisted of an interviewee answering no more than 3 questions total. All interviewees were offered the option to “pass” on a question they did not wish to answer, and those who opted to “pass” were invited to randomly select and answer an alternate question (of the original 12) instead.

Because this community engagement work was funded by an EPA Brownfields Area Wide Planning grant, the Technical Assistance team and the teen cohort were unable to design or utilize a formalized, statistically significant survey methodology. Rather, this work was more of an environmental scan designed to help provide qualitative context to any future survey work. Also, to ensure robust participation by a variety of desired and oft-marginalized populations, all community feedback activities were designed to be short (5 minutes or less), “light touch” and informal. As such, the raw data results, and similarly the “top trends” gleaned from those results, are to be considered informal and qualitative in nature, offering a broad snapshot of East Bayside sentiment regarding how and in what ways brownfield cleanup and reuse could address and/or take advantage of community needs and opportunities. Additionally, because the interview methodology was “light touch”, teen cohort members





## **Conclusion**

It would seem the East Bayside Brownfield Area Wide Planning project poses a real opportunity to set intentions and create an action plan that involves more than brownfield assessment, cleanup, reuse and new construction. A core vision that asserts intention and tangible plans to preserve, celebrate and bolster these beloved, must-keep aspects of East Bayside—through projects, programming and partnerships—is a tangible way to ensure Portland and all of its stakeholders leverage the best of East Bayside while making it better still for all.