**Insights and Considerations Learned from Workshop Participants**

**Understanding Values of Communities**

***A selection of observations from co-design workshops***

**2024**

**Workshop Description**

We asked participants about the **values** **that are important to understand about the community** they serve and/or are a part of, in the context of trees, green space, and other urban forestry initiatives. The identified values can inform urban forestry initiatives in their planning and execution.

**Considerations and Insights**

***General***

* **Cultural Connection with Nature**
  + Deep connection with nature, integrating origin stories, spiritual beliefs, and cultural practices.
  + Emphasis on passing down knowledge, medicines, and traditions through generations.
* **Stewardship and Responsibility**
  + Active approach to caring for the environment.
  + Duty to care based on religion, custom, or law.
  + Conservation efforts emphasizing native species and cultural knowledge.
* **Community and Family**
  + Strong sense of community and family values.
  + Outdoor access valued for large gatherings and events.
  + Reverence for community elders and knowledge dissemination.
* **Environmental Education and Awareness**
  + Recognition of gaps in knowledge about plant care and climate issues.
  + Desire for education on planting, climate awareness, and resource scarcity.
* **Independence and Agency**
  + Urban forestry and green space initiatives fostering self-sufficiency.
  + Desire for community engagement, decision-making, and real outcomes.
* **Equity, Access, and Inclusion**
  + Awareness of exclusion from certain spaces, emphasizing the need for access.
  + Targeted advertising to enhance inclusion in green space initiatives.
* **Health and Well-being**
  + Health benefits derived from green spaces.
  + Importance of creating green spaces on healthy land.
  + Recognition of the impact on health due to the lack of green space.
* **Trust, Safety, and Ownership**
  + Need for trust through thoughtful community engagement and co-design.
  + Safety concerns and the importance of creating safe spaces.
  + Historical ties with green spaces as a prerequisite for engagement and ownership.

***Indigenous Participant Insights***

* **Connection/Gratitude**
  + **Connection to Nature:** Emphasis on a profound connection between many Indigenous people and Earth.
  + **Respect for Natural Resources:** Recognition and respect for gods and natural resources, expressing gratitude for all that nature provides.
* **Culture**
  + **Knowledge Transmission:** Importance of knowing trees and cultural relevance, including the passing down of medicines, healing practices, spirit dwellings, and historical narratives.
  + **Accountability for Generations:** Everyone is accountable for passing down cultural values and knowledge to ensure continuity through generations.
* **Deep Connection with Nature**
  + **Origin Stories:** A deep connection with nature tied to origin and creation stories.
  + **Cultural Practices:** Integration of cultural practices such as healing, food, and beauty within the natural environment.
  + **Unity with Nature:** Many Indigenous people view themselves as an integral part of nature rather than separate or outside it.
* **Stewardship & Care**
  + **Active Approach to Caring:** An active approach to caring for the world, manifesting in behaviors like thoughtful stewardship, gardening, and landscaping.
  + **Cultural Knowledge in Stewardship:** Stewardship emphasizes the importance of native species and placing trees appropriately based on cultural knowledge.
* **Responsibility**
  + **Duty to Care:** A sense of duty to care for the environment, whether motivated by religious beliefs, customs, or legal obligations.
  + **Irrevocable Responsibility:** Many feel that environmental responsibility is not something that can be set aside or ignored but is an inherent and irrevocable duty.

***African American/Black Participant Insights***

* **Strong Community for Change:**
  + Reliance on community churches, clergymen, elders, and youth to drive positive change.
* **Connection to Land/Ownership:**
  + Deep attachment to the land, despite a history of exploitation, reflects pride and ownership.
* **Existing Infrastructure:**
  + Utilize the robust network of elders and community leaders in urban forestry engagement.
  + Leverage existing infrastructure for community improvement.
* **Resilience:**
  + Demonstrates resilience throughout historical trauma, with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and focus.
* **Joy:**
  + Despite challenges, there is a prevailing sense of joy, and fostering Black joy is crucial in community processes.
* **Established Community Places:**
  + Barber shops and beauty shops serve as vital components of existing infrastructures and places for connection.

***Latine/Latino Participant Insights***

* **Conserving Native Roots & Cultures:**
  + **Community and History:** Individuals value their community, cherishing the knowledge passed down through generations, especially from elders (*abuelita knowledge*).
  + **Tight-Knit Neighborhoods:** Strong community bonds within tight-knit neighborhoods, often centered around churches and communal spaces.
  + **Inclusive Mentality:** Embraces a "We want you here" mentality, prioritizing family-centered approaches.
* **Community/Family:**
  + **Outdoor Gathering Value:** Latine communities highly value outdoor access for various gatherings, such as cookouts, sports, and picnics.
  + **Respect for Elders:** Deep reverence for community elders and individuals who hold distinct roles, like *promotores* (community health works), and are relied upon for knowledge dissemination.
* **Conservation/Stewardship:**
  + **History of Conservation:** Highlights a long history of conservation, both of resources/materials and the land itself.
  + **Culturally Specific Conservation Language:** Suggest using conservation-based language in a culturally specific context for impactful communication.
* **Equity/Access:**
  + **Awareness of Exclusion:** Acknowledges the awareness of exclusion from certain spaces, emphasizing the importance of considering access in new initiatives.
  + **Safe Open Spaces:** Calls for access to open spaces that are safe, well-maintained, and not run-down, especially in lower-income areas.
* **Reciprocity and Pre-Colonial Views of Nature:**
  + **Nature as Part of the Community:** Expresses the understanding that "Nature" has not always been separate from humans; it is viewed as part of the community, emphasizing reciprocity and mutual provision.

**Selected Resources**

These resources provide examples of organizations incorporating values-based planning into their work, how-to's focused on assessing community needs through thoughtful engagement and recognition of values, and a case study that can provide guidance and insight.

**EXAMPLE -** [**Nature Sacred**](https://naturesacred.org/our-work/our-approach/)**:** Nature Sacred exists to inspire, inform and guide communities in the creation of public green spaces—what we call Sacred Places—designed to improve mental health, unify communities and engender peace. There a variety of resources that ensure that community’s values are considered while green space initiatives are being planned and implemented

**HOW-TO -** [**Community Tool Box**](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/describe-the-community/main)**:** The University of Kansas’ Community Tool Box is a free, online resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change. The following guide can help you describe and understand a community and its values.

**CASE STUDY -** [**Urban Forestry in a Multicultural Society**](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228871516_Urban_Forestry_in_a_Multicultural_Society)**:** This paper highlights the critical need for community engagement and understanding prior to beginning any urban forestry initiative.

**References**

*Chapter 3. Assessing Community Needs and Resources | Section 2. Understanding and Describing the Community | Main Section | Community Tool Box*. (n.d.). <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/describe-the-community/main>

*Our Approach - Nature Sacred*. (2021, March 8). Nature Sacred. <https://naturesacred.org/our-work/our-approach/>

Johnston, Mark & Shimada, Lia. (2004). Urban Forestry in a Multicultural Society. 185 Journal of Arboriculture. 30. 10.48044/jauf.2004.023.