

Insights and Considerations Learned from Workshop Participants

Understanding Strengths of Communities

A selection of observations from co-design workshops

2024

Workshop Description

We asked participants about the strengths towards urban forestry initiatives that are important to understand about the community they serve and/or are a part of. The identified strengths can inform urban forestry initiatives in their planning and execution.

Strengths: These strengths were identified through all five sets of workshops. More specific values from specific communities are identified, as well. While these insights can provide guidance concerning engaging with specific communities, we recognize the limitation that a set of workshops is only a small component of best practices in community engagement.

Considerations and Insights

General

- **Pride in Culture/Community**
 - Celebration through ceremonies, entertainment, and music.
 - Passing down cultural traditions across generations to preserve identity.
 - Embracing a larger understanding of mutual care, emphasizing the importance of taking care of elders.
- **Resilience**
 - Endurance through extreme hardship, trauma, and historical challenges.
 - Demonstrating resilience in the face of adversity, with a focus on overcoming challenges.
 - Tapping into generational knowledge and networks for sustained strength.
- **Community/Reciprocity**
 - Relying on strong community ties for support and engagement in both good and bad times.
 - Understanding the critical role of social interactions and collaboration in community engagement.
- **Connection to Land/Ownership**
 - Deep attachment to the land, fostering a sense of pride and ownership.

- Recognizing the importance of community engagement around urban forestry and leveraging existing networks for improvement.
- **Existing Infrastructure and Community Places**
 - Recognizing established places like barber shops and beauty shops as crucial components of existing infrastructures for community connection.
 - Leveraging existing human and physical infrastructure for community improvement
- **Joy and Happiness**
 - Fostering joy despite historical challenges, violence, and trauma.
 - Emphasizing the importance of fostering Black joy and creating spaces for joyous activities.
- **Education and Innovation**
 - Acknowledging the need for education on planting and cultivation, especially in a different cultural context.
 - Recognizing the innovative potential of communities, with a focus on providing appropriate spaces for sharing ideas.
- **Collaboration and Community Engagement**
 - Emphasizing collaboration with cultural groups to drive change and promote unity.
 - Teaching generational values and promoting pride in culture, family, environment, and caretaking.
 - Recognizing green spaces as unifying elements that connect people across cultural divides.

Indigenous Participant Insights

- **Pride in Culture/Community**
 - Celebrates culture through ceremonies, entertainment, and music.
 - Emphasis on passing down cultural knowledge through generations to prevent its loss.
 - An adherence to philosophies like, "*I ola 'oe I ola mākou nei*" (My life depends on yours, your life depends on mine), promoting a larger understanding of caring for one another and a purpose-driven life.
- **Resilience**
 - Endurance through extreme and targeted hardship and trauma.
 - Demonstrates a significant amount of resilience, overcoming various challenges.
- **Community/Reciprocity**
 - Strong reliance on community ties through good and bad times.
 - Emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with the community for effective community engagement.

African American/Black Participant Insights

- **Strong Community for Change**
 - Community-driven efforts for change, relying on community churches, clergymen, elders, and youth.

- **Connection to Land/Ownership**
 - Deep attachment to the land, with a sense of pride and ownership in maintaining spaces.
- **Existing Infrastructure (Human & Physical)**
 - Utilizes existing networks of elders and community leaders for engagement.
 - Leverages the desire for improvement in existing physical infrastructure.
- **Resilience**
 - Demonstrates historical resilience and an entrepreneurial spirit.
 - Possesses a strong focus that can be channeled into various projects.
- **Joy**
 - Cultivates joy despite historical challenges and trauma.
 - Suggests the importance of fostering Black joy as part of community processes.
- **Established Community Places**
 - Recognizes places like barber shops and beauty shops as essential components of existing infrastructures for community connection.

Latine/Latino Participant Insights

- **Family/History/Culture**
 - Strong emphasis on family, history, and culture as integral components of identity.
- **Resilience:**
 - Demonstrates resilience, with the introduction of green spaces aligning with community resilience.
- **Existing Community Organizing**
 - Natural connection through existing channels and organizing paths.
 - Benefits of green spaces align with the resilient community.
- **Holístico (Holistic Health)**
 - Acknowledges various factors affecting well-being and embraces a holistic understanding of health.
- **Innovation**
 - Belief in community members having answers and the need for appropriate spaces to share them.
- **Entrepreneurial Spirit**
 - Can-do attitude and creativity among community members.
 - Expresses the potential for positive change if resources are accessible.

Selected Resources

These resources provide examples of organizations incorporating strengths-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 insight.

EXAMPLE - [Utah State University's Forestry Extension's Effective Community Involvement Strategies](#):

Best practices involving community involvement and support in urban forestry initiatives. These include working with community members to establish broad support, rather than coming in occasionally to recruit volunteers for manual labor.

HOW-TO - [Vibrant Cities Self-Assessment Tool](#): This tool can be used to measure a community's current strengths in the context of urban forestry. These strengths include current urban forestry conditions, community capacity, community perception, and established plans. It is a great place to start if you are looking to begin planning initiatives in a community. It can also help you refine both the area in which you are planning on working, as well as the scope of a project.

CASE STUDY - [City of Tacoma Urban Forest Audit](#): This tool, used by the City of Tacoma to measure its urban forestry goals, emphasizes the important of developing strong partnerships between the City, partners, and the community through the recognition and leveraging of community strengths.

References

2019 URBAN FOREST AUDIT SYSTEM RANKING. (2019). City of Tacoma. Retrieved March 5, 2024, from https://cms.cityoftacoma.org/enviro/UrbanForestry/UrbanForestManagementPlan/Ph2_Chapters/UFM_P_Ph2_9.pdf

Community Assessment & Goal-Setting Tool. (n.d.). <https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/assessment-tool/>

Ensuring Effective Community Involvement in Urban Forestry | Forestry | Extension. (n.d.). USU. <https://extension.usu.edu/forestry/trees-cities-towns/urban-forestry/ensuring-community-involvement>