

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.

Values: These values 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

- **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 workers), 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](#): 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](#): 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](#): 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.