Article 80 Community Engagement

Cities Best Practices Report

December 2023
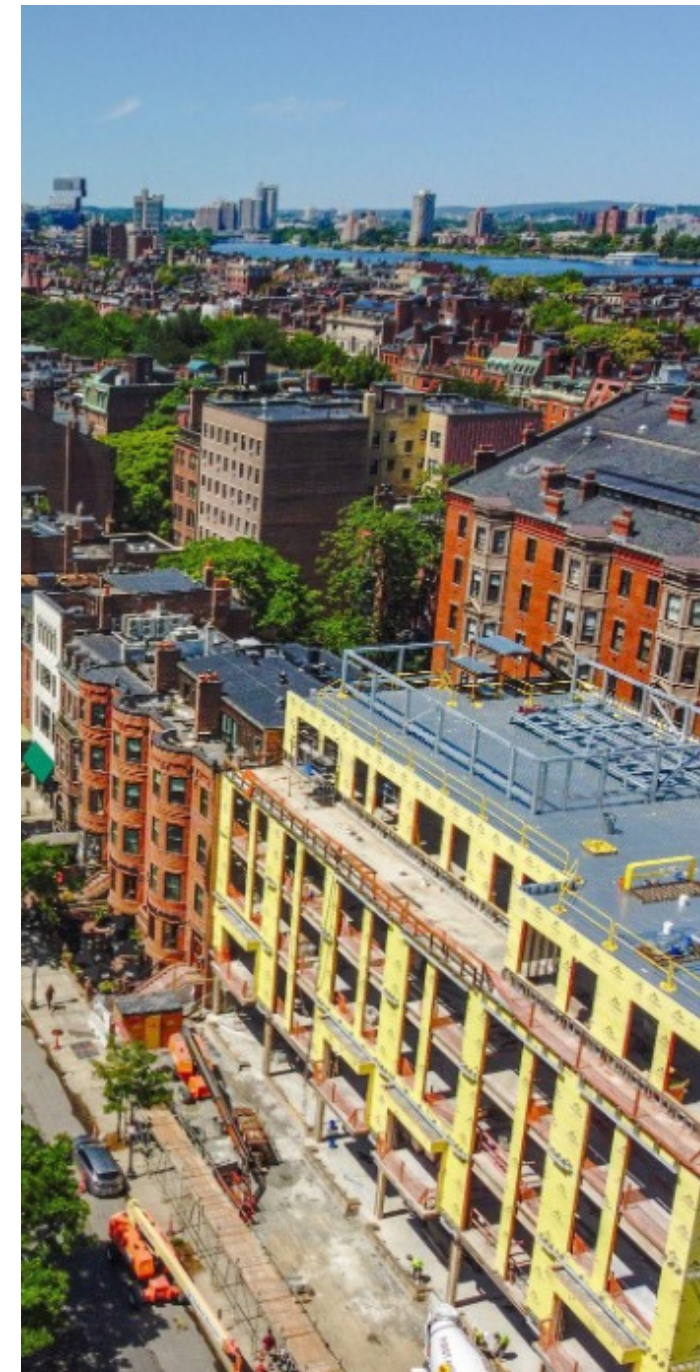
In this Report

Table of Contents

Context

Boston's development will increasingly reflect its projected population growth rate of 13.5% and community engagement efforts need to adapt to an expanded volume of development projects.

Boston has doubled its population growth between 2010 and 2020 with a 9.4% increase, reaching 675,000 residents. Detailed demographic projections by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) expects Boston to have a 13.5% population growth by 2030. With 10 metropolitan divisions in the state, the Boston-Cambridge-Newton MA division accounts for 69% of the metropolitan area's nonfarm employment. The demand for workforce housing in 2030 is therefore estimated to be 44,000 units.

With a mounting housing crisis since the pandemic of 2020, Boston finds itself at a critical juncture for increasing its housing production and therefore the amount of development in the city. In 2022 the BPDA approved 2647 residential units, 44% of which are income restricted housing units and a total of 9.1 million sq ft of new development was approved in 2022. Simultaneously, the city has launched various incentives to increase housing production such as tax breaks offered to developers for converting under-used office space into housing units. Various forces contribute to Boston's expanding volume of development and the Article 80 process needs to evolve with the city's growth trajectory.

Community engagement in the Article 80 (A80) process is especially important for ensuring development reflects the voices of a diverse population that inhabits the city. Since development necessary, the role of engagement points with the public is to build consensus, offer transparency and a participatory process that enables different resident groups to engage with the city's planning and development efforts. Some of the challenges facing BPDA and other city agencies is to build trust with community members, diversify resident voices that participate in engagement touch points, and formalize knowledge systems that help center community experiences and aspirations into the development review process.

Report Approach

This report provides the BPDA with a review of community engagement best practices for planning and development. The first part of the report curates a set of municipal best practices based on a review of five cities, three that are similar sized to Boston and two with larger population sizes to understand how community engagement efforts can sustain the city's projected growth. Learnings from each city are applied to various parts of the A80 process as a way of highlighting next steps in the reimagining of the process and the systemic reform.

The second part of the report identifies innovative approaches to engagement from adjacent areas of work in social impact design, community led-design, and planning as well as urban experiential design. This analysis transcends global boundaries and focuses on the methods and approaches used to activate engagement. It therefore underscores *how* to create effective engagement, especially with hard to reach communities. Looking at examples of engagement efforts beyond municipal boundaries offer new thinking that can be applied to the Article 80 community engagement points.

Selecting Cities

	RATIONALE	BEST PRACTICES	IMPACT ON A80
Seattle	Similar sized city that has witnessed a development boom in the past decade. Is a city of neighborhoods similar to Boston. It has a high volume of large-scale development often led by corporations. This is comparable to the high volume of institutional development that takes place across Boston.	Early Engagement Model as part of Seattle's Development Review. The new practice includes various engagement efforts that are taken on by developers and embeds community voices in shaping project scope from the most initial step of development review.	The approach would directly impact the activities within the prefile process and will have subsequent effects on centering community voices across scoping and memo development activities
Toronto	The largest of the five cities, Toronto is a city with 45% of its population being foreign born. The city therefore has adapted various planning and development strategies to transcend language barriers and find ways to reach priority resident populations.	Effective model for a resident planning panel that as a medium for resident capacity building and participation in planning and development projects Strategic use of civic-tech platforms	Practices, if applied to the A80 process, can shape public meetings and help re-imagine the model for resident committees such as the IAG

Evaluation Criteria

The learning in this report builds off the operational analysis memo provided to the BPDA by Rivera Consulting at an earlier stage of the A80 community engagement project. Municipal best practices for community therefore analyzed across scales of models for engagement, tactics for outreach and communication and at a more granular level the activities and community facing touchpoints. This was the framework used to evaluate community engagement efforts in the BPDA as part of the operational review memo. Subcategories within each of these were used to segment city-level information and build a holistic narrative for each of the five case studies.

MODELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Systemic interventions with the ability to shape engagement on a macro, policy level and a more micro activity level

- Application of Civic Tech
- New Models for Resident Committees
- Metrics that are a combination of planning and development mindsets
- Centering a Community Driven Lens
- Digital Equity Best Practices

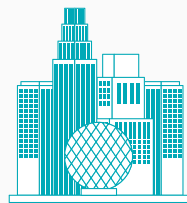| RATIONALE	BEST PRACTICES	IMPACT ON A80
Baltimore — As a fast growing city within the US, being of a similar size to Boston, Baltimore's development efforts require new tactics for engaging residents as the city prepares for more growth and alongside institutions such as Johns Hopkins.	Practices for trust building in community through capacity building initiatives that are open to various resident groups.	Provides new approaches for public meetings and developing trust with different resident communities
Vancouver — Vancouver has globally become a city for benchmarking planning efforts. The approach to planning and development efforts in Vancouver gives ways forward for agencies such as the BPDA to center different community perspectives for shaping urbanism.	Various best practices for using civic tech to reach priority resident populations such as seniors, immigrants and those who are differently abled.	Best practices to make the public comments period more open and inclusive through the use of civic-tech platforms
Philadelphia — With a population of 1.4 million people, Philadelphia is a larger city than Boston and development in the city is greatly influenced by large institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania. To sustain its population growth, Philadelphia has had to ramp up its development efforts.	Within its many neighborhoods, Philadelphia has needed to rely on innovative partnerships and methods of facilitation for effective community engagement.	Can impact A80 on an activity level, strengthening the facilitation and therefore the outcome of various public meetings in different community forums

Evaluation Criteria

OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION TACTICS

Multi-modal methods and mediums for communicating with the public

- Outreach Channels
- Reaching Diverse Communities
- Information Sharing
- Support from/ Access to Officials

ACTIVITIES & COMMUNITY FACING TOUCHPOINTS

Points of interaction with community members, in person or virtual meeting and often facilitated

- Facilitation Techniques
- Mediums of Public Interaction
- Comment Periods
- Transparency and Feedback Loops
- Civic Organization Partners
- Timing of Engagement

Innovative Approaches for Engagement

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

A partnership led model that links resources such as architects, urban designers, and civic organizations together with residents groups to work on public realm projects from start to finish. This is an example of fostering a community led design process and not just points of engagement, a model well suited for institutional planning and development projects on a neighborhood level

EXAMPLE: URBAN DESIGN FORUM, NEW YORK

HUMAN CENTERED FACILITATION

Facilitation approaches that encourage collaboration and activities that help simplify complex policy changes and adaptable to languages other than English

EXAMPLE: SOCIAL DESIGN COLLABORATIVE, NEW DELHI   **EXAMPLE: MAPC CHINATOWN VISIONING, BOSTON**

CIVIC-TECH FOR DIVERSIFYING ENGAGEMENT

Civic technology is constantly changing the way we envision the experience of a city. In the case of community engagement civic tech platforms offer a plethora of methods for engaging with residents at the same time they can be strategically used to increase access to information and officials, therefore building trust.

EXAMPLE: ENGAGE PGH, PITTSBURG

Innovative approaches for engagement were curated based on three core challenges that affect the effectiveness of engagement efforts in the A80 process:

1

Formalizing the use of community-centered data

2

Diversifying resident voices in engagement points

3

Building trust through transparency

Municipal Best Practices

- Seattle

- Toronto

- Baltimore

- Vancouver

- Philadelphia

Seattle

Case Study 01

Designing, implementing and encouraging an Early Engagement Model that shapes Community Engagement.

Seattle is one of the fastest growing large cities in the United States. Even in the midst of the pandemic, the city grew at a rate of 2.4% between mid 2021 and 2022 . Similar to Boston, large entities control a significant portion of the city's land use. However, it is not academic institutions, but some of the largest corporations in the world that drive these planning efforts. Amazon amassed 8.1 million square feet of office space in Downtown Seattle back in 2017 and has continued to grow its footprint. Such development activities significantly skews the kind of community engagement needed for development projects in the city. With the recent reduction in the rate of new development, the city has focused on improving the urban experience by investing in transportation projects that increase vehicle throughput.

Community engagement efforts for development and planning in Seattle need to account for several of these socio-economic variables. The city has placed an emphasis on eliminating language barriers, developing and adapting localized metrics to refine engagement efforts while sharing accountability of early engagement efforts between developers, civic organizations and government agencies such as the Department of Neighborhoods (DON).

CONTEXT

7737K *Total Population*

8.87K *Building Permits in 2022*

2025 *Next Update to Zoning Plan*

2024 *Next Update to One Seattle Plan*

KEY TACTICS

Formalized early engagement efforts in the pre-file stage that takes into account community input from the start of the project and defines the initial scope of the project.

Development of metrics such as 'Urban Village' highlights neighborhoods with a higher portion of low income populations that may need revitalization efforts but not necessarily new development efforts. This is a good example of a combined, planning and development metric that makes engagement efforts hyper-localized.

The city government has put in efforts to develop a range of resources, guides, and toolkits to encourage the development and submission of early engagement plan by developers.

Guidelines for early engagement suggests that developments must activate a combination of high-touch and low-touch engagement points across a range of communication mediums.

KEY TACTICS RELEVANT TO A80

Early engagement is an additional step that was developed by the Department of Planning and Community Development and spearheaded by DON and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection (SDCI). This formalized existing community engagement efforts done by developers and brought it into the review process.

Early engagement integrates community input from the start of the process and shapes the initial scope of the project that various stakeholders will start to review.

A model for community engagement can only be successful if there are supporting resources and information provided to the stakeholders who will guide and activate efforts.

In a city of neighborhoods, much like Boston, localized metrics such as the urban village indicator can foster a neighborhood level-understanding that can shape engagement efforts.

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

Office of Planning and Community Development

Developers

Civic Organizations

Department of Neighborhoods (DON)

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection (SDCI)

Primary Stakeholders
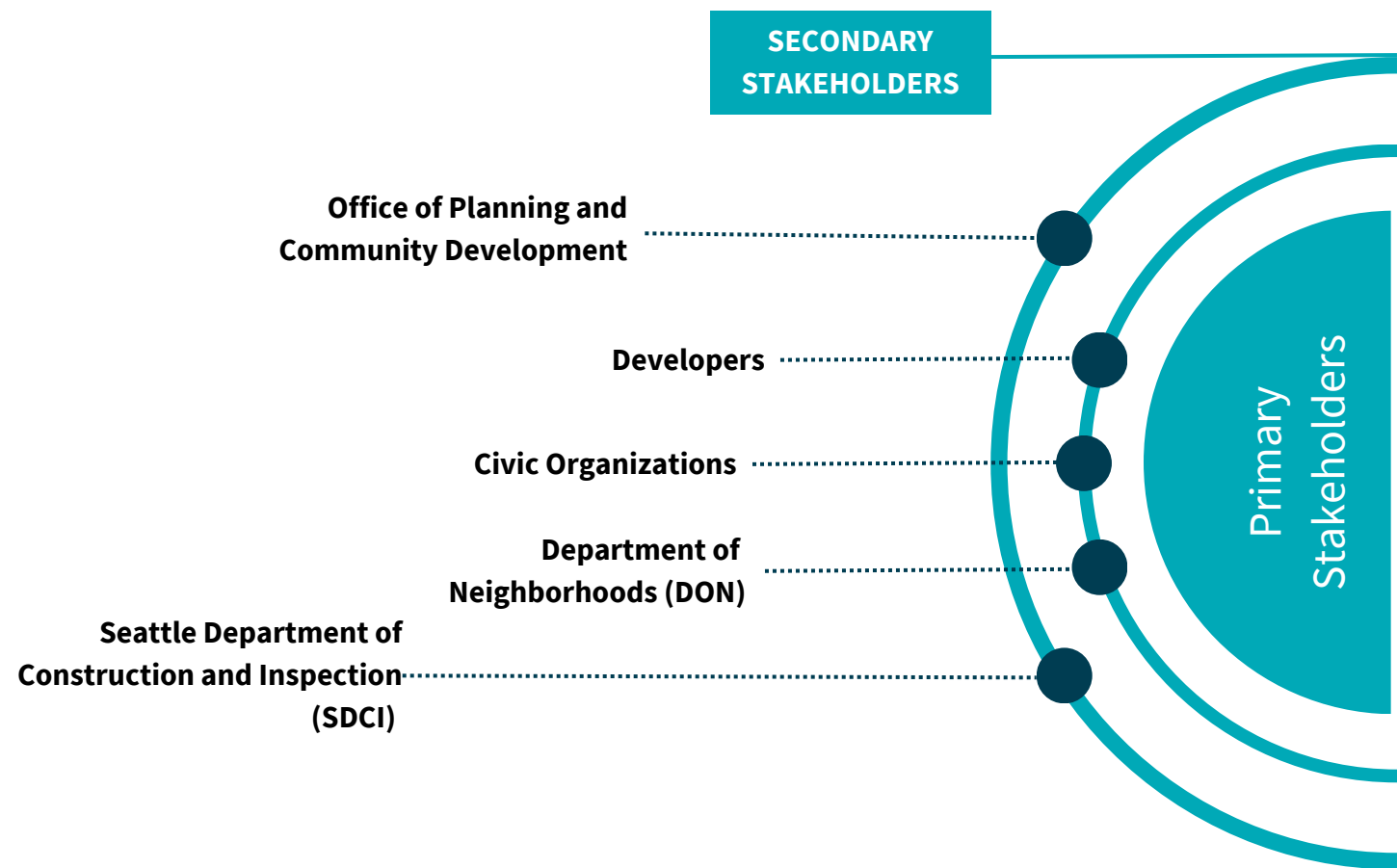
KEY STAKEHOLDERS SHAPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Early engagement model and its implementation is guided by expertise of community facing stakeholder groups.

The early engagement model in Seattle's development review process encourages developers to build an engagement plan with key civic organizations for a new project. The DON provides developers with resources such as a regularly updated list of civic organizations across neighborhoods, a guideline for the development of an engagement plan while providing a municipal lens to the engagement. The DON is the point of contact for the developers to gain approval on their early engagement efforts. It serves as not only a resource but an intermediary between civic organizations and the developers.

SDCI on the other hand is the final approving body before the project is passed onto the Early Design Guidance review led by the planning department. The secondary stakeholders thus have the responsibility of ensuring set standards for engagement are met and are critical as a measurement and evaluation touchpoint.

**BENCHMARKING PRACTICES FOR A80 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The early engagement model was introduced to Seattle's development review process because a series of research efforts surfaced that developers were conducting different forms of community engagement that were not standardized or documented. The DON and SDCI developed a model for centering community input early on in the review process for any project by connecting developers with civic organizations and setting standards for how engagement efforts are implemented.

Some of the outreach and communication standards that guide engagement activities include the requirement of developing multi-pronged methods for in person, digital, and printed outreach. Sample engagement plans and neighborhood information as well as a repository of civic organizations are provided to developers as a way ensuring engagement efforts are activated, documented and standardized in order to be measured.

The model tries to center community-centric project development from the start of a review process and has proven to be critical in building community trust in a city where large developers hold significant power.

AREA OF IMPACT IN THE A80 PROCESS

The early engagement model can greatly shape the pre-file stage of the A80 process and can have spillover effects shaping engagement touchpoints during scoping and memo development
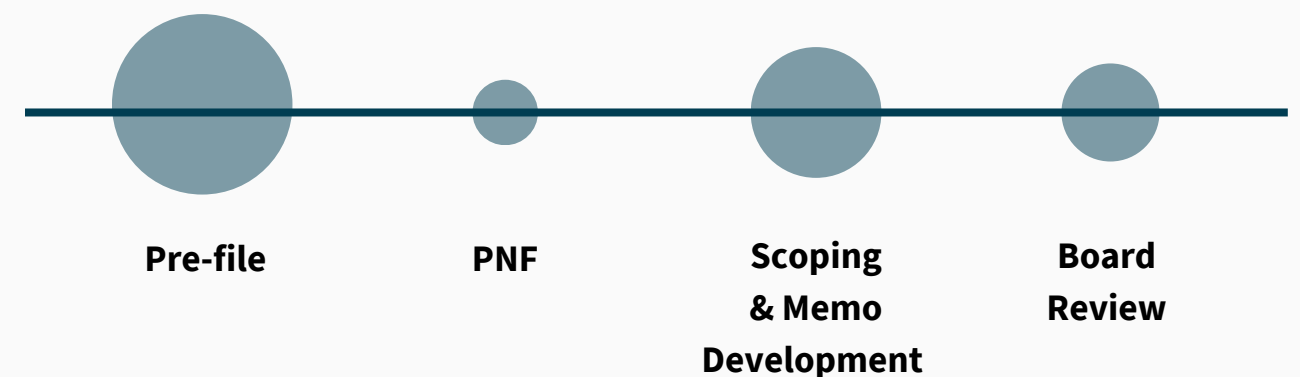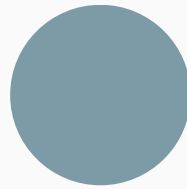

Pre-file **PNF** **Scoping & Memo Development** **Board Review**

	EXISTING CONDITION IN A80	MODELS FOR ENGAGEMENT	OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION TACTICS	ACTIVITIES & COMMUNITY FACING TOUCHPOINTS
Pre-file	In Boston, developer teams refine the scope in the pre-file stage via inputs from the BPDA project team before the project is opened up for public comments. There is no community input that shapes the project from its starting point	If the Early Engagement model is applied to the A80 process, community input initiates the review process. It formalizes existing knowledge and engagement efforts in place by developers and sets standards for effective engagement partnerships with civic organizations	Outreach and communication needs to take place on two levels: Communication with Developers: Communication toolkits, guideline documents for engagement efforts that also serve as capacity building resources Communication with Civic Society: Activate model through formal communication to ONS, Neighborhood Councils and key Civic Organizations	Operational: Build and update a repository of civic organizations willing to participate and partner with developer teams Community Forums: Set standards for virtual and in-person engagements. CEMs can activate feedback loops that relay back documentation to the community
PNF	The public comments period opens up for 30 days for every project after it is made public		Release of the PNF should highlight significant updates made to the project based on initial feedback	A set of guided questions can be developed for filling out the public comments form or survey instead of a letter. Questions can test, validate and further define early engagement points
Scoping & Memo Development	Scoping sessions are often interagency meetings but can often not center community understanding and need Public meetings are conducted in formal settings often by IAGs but the uncontrollable scope of the meetings do not bring back data to the project scoping sessions and subsequent memo development		Scoping sessions can center community centered data collected and documented during early engagement	Public meetings continue to adhere to the same standards set for early engagement efforts such that there is a diversity of mediums being used and there are clear facilitation guidelines for a more targeted approach to community participation
Board Review	Final call for community feedback is only posted in newspapers. The only formal community centered data point being referred to is the quantified data from the public comments			If set standards for documenting community feedback are at play from the start of the process. Community voice can be centered in final conversations for the project to still be reflective of community input

Toronto

Case Study 02

Making resident-led planning and development committees effective

Toronto is a much larger city to Boston with a population of 2.7 million, and has had to adapt various community engagement efforts to its growing immigrant population. According to a 2019 report on Population Demographics published by the City of Toronto, 47% of the city's population is foreign born and saw a 16% increase between 2016 and 2021. Recent policy changes on a city level have a focus on increasing the affordable housing inventory. In early November 2023, the city council passed Mayor Oliva Chow's Affordable Housing Plan that envisions 65,000 low-cost housing units to be built in the city by 2030. After decades in the city's development history, the development of these low-cost housing units will be led by the city government.

In 2014 the City of Toronto designated 31 of its 140 neighborhoods as Neighborhood Improvement Areas (NIA) that require additional resources and investments in civic services. NIAs are also some of the most diverse locations in the city and the metric has become a significant indicator for shaping planning and development efforts. Engagement efforts for development projects also make use of civic-tech platforms such as Social Pinpoint for low-touch public engagement that helps diversify public participation.

One of the key best practices from Toronto is their model for a resident committee. The Toronto Planning Review Panel is created every two years via a city lottery system that invites residents to participate and provides essential training in planning practices. The model serves as a form of resident capacity building and a medium for participatory governance on a two-year cycle.

CONTEXT

2.8 MILLION *Total Population*

45% *Foreign Born*

86.7K *Under Construction Units*

2021 *Inclusionary Zoning Policy*

2022 *Last Update to City Plan*

KEY TACTICS

Strategic use of civic-tech platforms for diversifying engagement efforts on projects and who engages with project conversations. The use of digital mediums for low-touch engagement points are adapted to different languages and ensure residents are not constrained by time and place for expressing opinions.

The city lottery system behind the Toronto Planning Review Panel is a randomized process with a distribution of invitations that are a rough proportion of the population size in different neighborhoods. Invites are sent to households every two years and number of invites are in proportion to the population size of neighborhoods for fairer representation.

Any resident above the age of 18 is eligible to participate in the Toronto Planning Review Panel; it therefore has a capacity building component that trains all new members in planning practices. Residents volunteer their time as an act of public service.

The last Toronto Planning Review Panel had 32 members, random selected based on different ages, genders, household tenures, and geographies, proportionate representation of racialized people.

As of 2021 the Committee of Adjustment introduced a redesigned notice of public hearing template the simplifies information and encourages participation across neighborhood.

Telephone office hours have also been offered, where community members can "Phone a Planner" to provide direct feedback about a development application or initiative.

KEY TACTICS RELEVANT TO A80

The Planning Review Panel provides critical benchmarks for a model of a citizen committee that is fairer with lower vested interests while providing best practices for outreach strategy to create equitable representation.

The panel is a critical form of resident capacity building, equipping citizens with tools and knowledge so that they can engage purposefully with policy and government agencies.

Outreach activities set high standards for visual communication, information architecture, and placement of communication material such that the differently abled have equal access to it.

Engagement points are disseminated across various mediums and are not constrained to formal meeting spaces. Strategic use of online platforms makes engagement more effective.

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

Planning and Housing Committee

Developers

Toronto Planning Review Panel

Department of Planning & Development

Civic Organizations

Community Development Unit

Primary Stakeholders
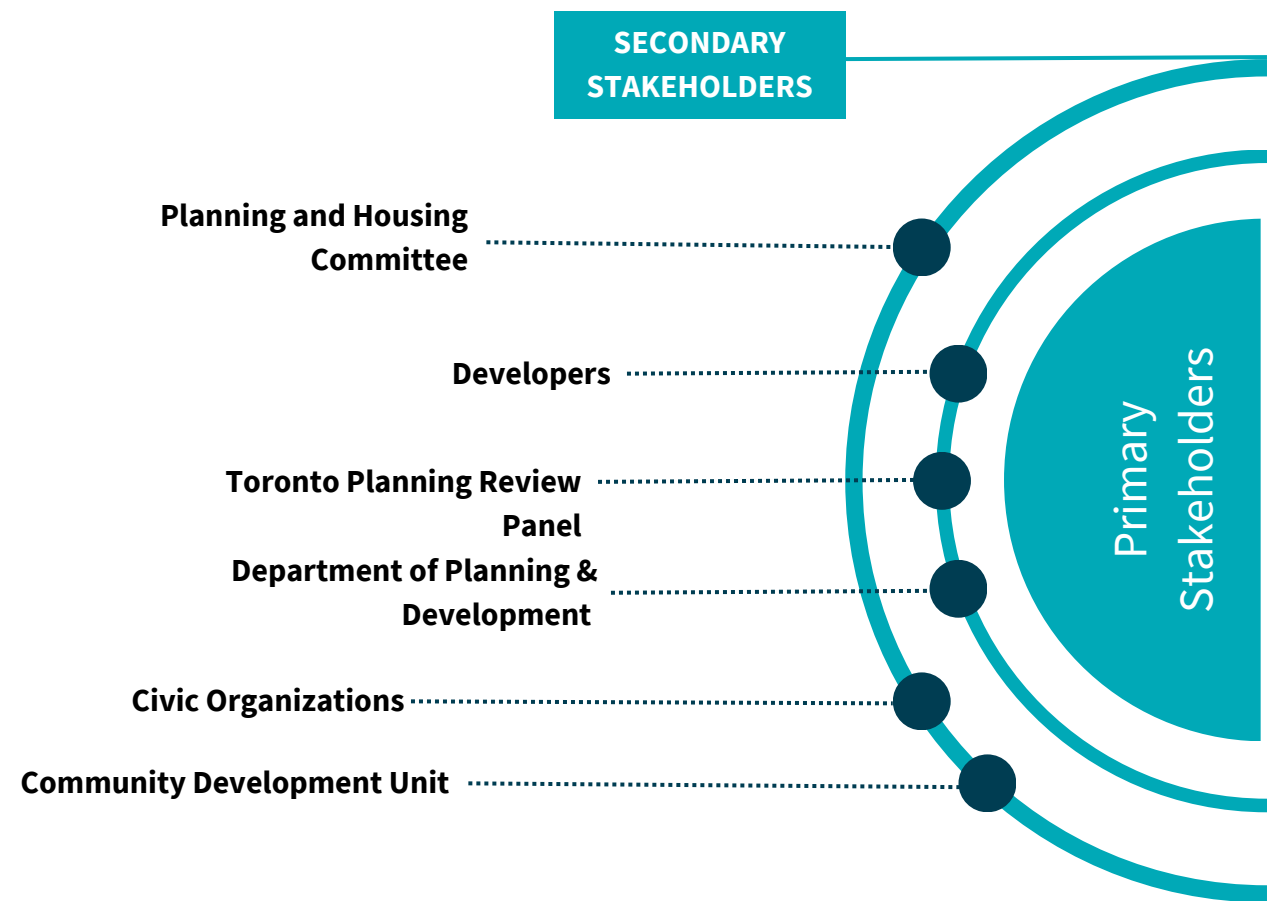
KEY STAKEHOLDERS SHAPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A strong outreach model for developing the Toronto Planning Review Panel strengthens community participation.

The City of Toronto's Planning and Development department has made significant progress in making planning and development practices more representative of Toronto's diversity. The Toronto Planning Review Panel's work with the Committee of Adjustment for inclusive signage creation for development projects is an example of how resident engagement efforts create impact on a policy and an activity level. Similar to the BPDA project teams, the planning department consults developers before a project is opened up to the public; however the Toronto Planning Review Panel may be engaged in the development of the public notification for the project.

Secondary stakeholders such as the Planning and Housing Committee spearheaded the transformation of Toronto's Development Review process back in 2021 and play a role in high impact, long-term change management processes. The department of community development is a resource for understanding different Toronto Neighborhoods and play a key role in the identification of the NIAs, a key development-planning metric for the city.

BENCHMARKING PRACTICES FOR A80 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

One of the key challenges in the Article 80 community engagement is the lack of diversity in resident participation. Toronto's municipal practices offer inclusive engagement models and mediums for outreach and communication that diversify participation and reduce vested interests. The use of modern engagement platforms such as Social Pinpoint on the other hand diversifies engagement touch points while the redesign of visual public hearing notifications transcends physical and language barriers to reach priority resident groups.

Community engagement efforts across planning projects are not dependent on digital mediums and civic tech platforms but they are complimented by a strategic use of these resources. Legacy models that have shaped planning and development efforts in the city over decades can also serve as innovative models for engagement in Boston. The Planning Review Panel for example follows a randomized outreach method, reaching households across the city neighborhoods and selecting residents above the age of 18 to volunteer on the panel for two years. Once selected, the process ensures there is proportionate representation of members and neighborhood populations. Members are given training and an understanding of planning policies before they serve in their roles. The example can be a significant best practice that can help reimagine the IAGs and the Institutional Task Forces in Boston's development review process.

AREA OF IMPACT IN THE A80 PROCESS

Two engagement models, one being the Toronto Planning Review and second being the strategic use of digital platforms for diversifying engagement can impact type of participation from the release of the PNF to the Board Review in the A80 process.
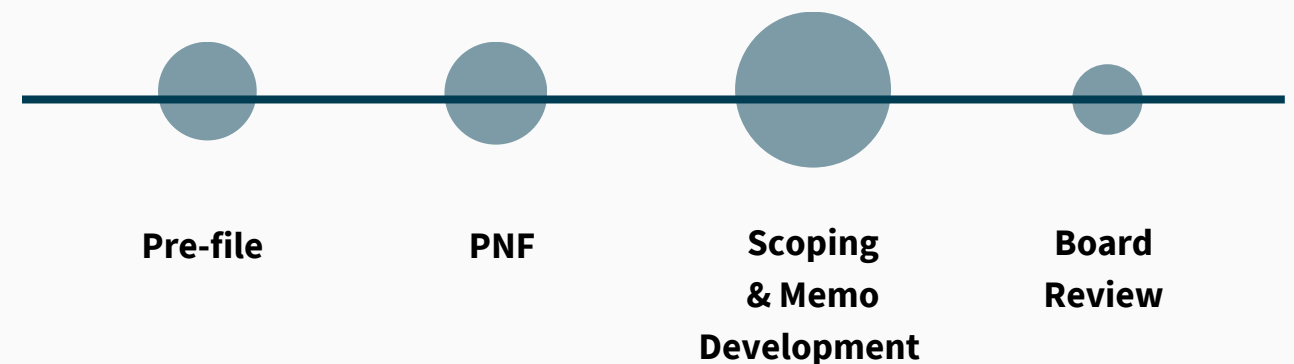
| Pre-file | PNF | Scoping & Memo Development | Board Review |

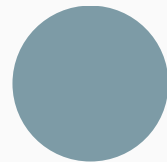|	EXISTING CONDITION IN A80	MODELS FOR ENGAGEMENT	OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION TACTICS	ACTIVITIES & COMMUNITY FACING TOUCHPOINTS
Pre-file	Developers go through several rounds of consultation with BPDA project teams, the planning, design and transportation department before PNF is released	Develop a resident planning committee that is selected via a city wide lottery for a two year cycle. If the BPDA works with ONS, MOH and Neighborhood councils to develop a foundational capacity building touchpoint for selected residents, the committee can become the first point of contact for developers		The planning committee works in consultation with community-facing city staff such as the BPDA CEMs and the Neighborhood Liaisons to center community needs into project proposal development
PNF	Public comments model is not inclusive to communities who do not have English as their first language or are not comfortable communicating in English The letter format also remains a high-touch, high time investment effort that may curb the diversity of responses even further	Model for public comments can be digitized, made a self guided form format or a quick poll format via platforms that are language adaptable such as Social Pinpoint	Ensuring the new format is distributed widely via partnerships with community-based organizations and one-one contacts CEMs have with community members, as well as utilizing easy access formats such as QR codes	
Scoping & Memo Development	Public meetings led by the IAG are simultaneously conducted as public meetings led by developers IAG meetings currently need more active facilitation from BPDA team members. The meetings need an agenda and guideline that directs conversation while creating room for civil debate	The new planning committee can work with the BPDA project team to develop a facilitation agenda for critical public meetings. A toolkit and guiding document of the planning committee's role will govern their involvement across A80 community engagement points. For example, members will take the lead on projects depending on location. Several of these considerations need to be documented	Subsequent public meetings can communicate status of various suggestions from the previous meeting	The planning committee members lead specific sections of the scoping sessions to relay back community feedback from public meetings especially since meetings will be documented basis standardized documentation practices
Board Review	Only form of engagement is a call for final comments in the newspaper. This does not generate valuable engagement		New channels for collecting final community feedback can be launched via accessible mediums such as a quick poll on Social Pinpoint or a SMS survey. Formats that can be easily quantified to make a case with the BPDA board	Planning committee can document final feedback received by CEMs or ONS on a project via informal channels and send it part of documentation for board review

Baltimore

Case Study 03

Building engagement models that build citizen capacity

Baltimore has seen a steady decline in overall population since reaching its peak in the mid 20th century. It saw a decrease of over 35,000 residents from 2010 to 2020, with a current population estimate of 586,000 residents as of the 2020 Decennial Census. However, the percentage of occupied units increased by 1% in that same time period, with the number of overall households increasing throughout the decade. This is explained by overall national and local trends that have seen a decrease in overall household size, which has shrunk from 3.14 in 1970 to 2.55 in 2020. Additionally, the socioeconomic development trends between the city of Baltimore and Baltimore County are inherently tied. The county itself has seen rapid demographic change, with a decrease in the white population from 75% to 50% in the preceding decade and an increase in the overall black population from 20% to 30%.

The city itself has had some success, albeit limited, in the production of multifamily housing units in recent years, with some inconsistency on a year-to-year basis. For instance, 2018 saw the city producing 1,464 multifamily housing units followed by a steep decline in 2019 of 380 units. 2021 to 2022 brought more consistency, with back to back to years of 1,549 and 1,879 multifamily housing units developed respectively. The long awaited revision to the city zoning code in 2017 has additionally paid dividends in this regard. The zoning update was the first seen in the city in over 45 years, and with it brought a new "industrial mixed-use" designation in hopes it would spur new approaches to residential development. The new code allowed for property owners to convert uses as-of-right to offices, retail, or service provider establishments. Previously, this change required approval from the city council. The change has appeared to have an impact, with an increase of residential mixed-use units from 174 in 2019 to 1,015 in 2022.

The city has focused much of its recent community engagement efforts primarily outside the purview of development review. It is currently in the process of updating the city's comprehensive master plan, its first comprehensive planning process in over 16 years. This has included the establishment of the Community Engagement Leadership Team, led by 20 community-based organizations within the city. The process also includes community storytelling ambassadors that provides a systematic approach to collecting resident insight as part of the comprehensive plan.

CONTEXT

585K *Total Population*

3.802K *Building Permits in 2022*

2017 *Updated Zoning Plan*

2024 *Next Update to Comprehensive Plan*

KEY TACTICS

Created increased avenues of community engagement outside the development review process, with limited opportunities for direct resident participation within the structure of new proposed development or altered use or purpose

Established the Planning Academy in 2018, a series of workshops for local residents that cover the principles of zoning, development review and neighborhood planning in Baltimore

Initiated levels of standard review for all proposed developments that sees development permitted as-of-right via internal review of code and regulation compliance, with minimal community involvement

Use of a nine-person body titled the "Planning Commission" that include four citizen representatives; this commission is able to provide recommendations and approval status for proposed developments that are not approved as-of-right, with written resident testimony allowed

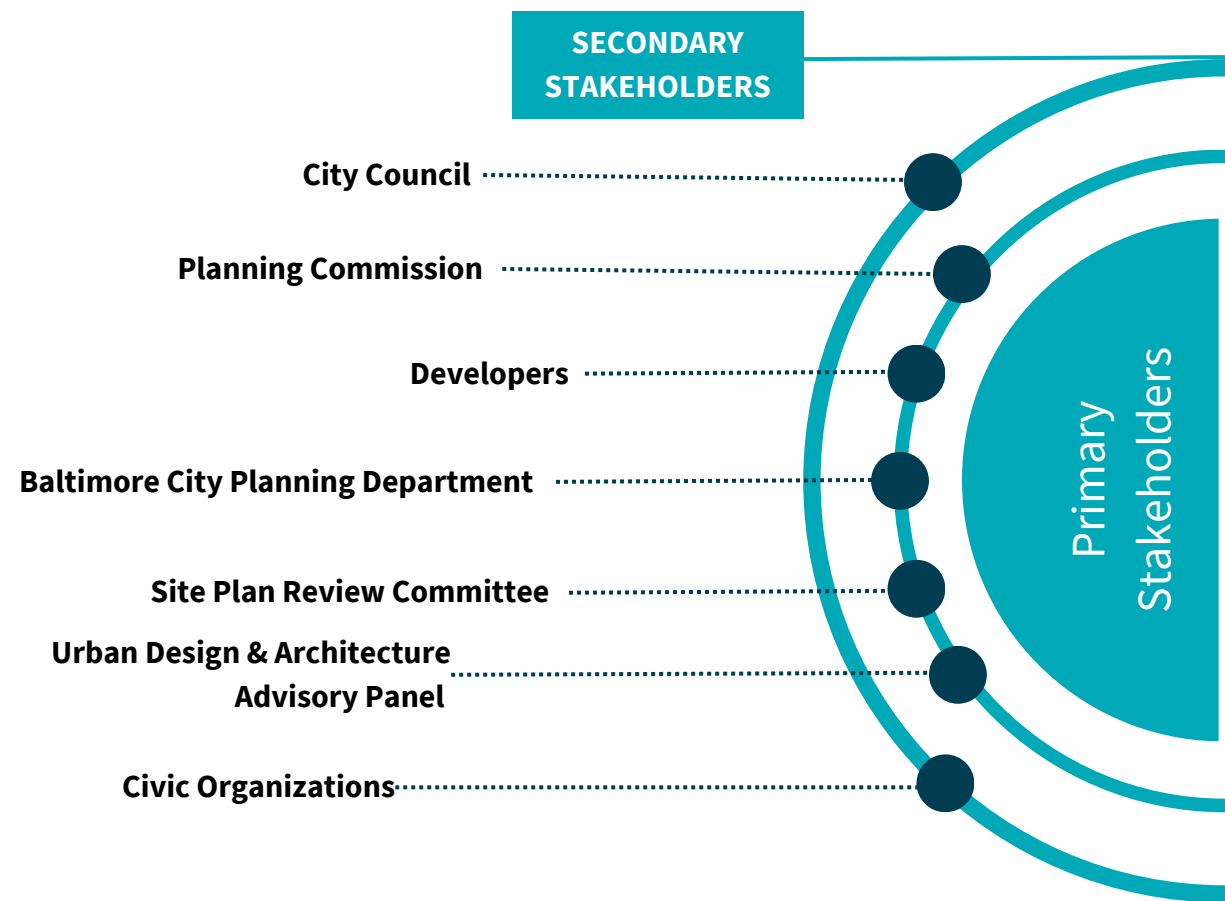## KEY TACTICS IN RELEVANT TO A80

Increased level of predictability for community involvement, with a tighter screen for direct community participation based on internal review procedures

No inconsistent citizen review bodies on a project-by-project basis, with a standard mixed citizen-member commission triggered only in specific circumstances

Emphasis on broader community education outside specific development review processes, with controlled opportunities for written testimony at intentional stages of longer development processes

Developers are heavily relied upon for early community engagement efforts and the identification of requested community benefits, with little to no role for the city planning staff

The limited nature of community involvement and representation within specific development review processes likely leads to expedited processes, but has large implications for equitable processes and outcomes for residents most susceptible to the negative externalities of development

City Council

Planning Commission

Developers

Baltimore City Planning Department

Site Plan Review Committee

Urban Design & Architecture Advisory Panel

Civic Organizations

Primary Stakeholders

KEY STAKEHOLDERS SHAPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Site Plan Review Committee influences engagement across wide areas of public life

The intentional and early standard review process within Baltimore's development review process provides an opportunity for developers to receive early permitting approval without the inclusion of intensive community engagement. The Site Plan Review Committee brings together the Departments of Planning, Sustainability, Housing, Parking, Public Works, and Transportation to provide an intensive early review that allows expedited approval. The inclusion of the Planning Committee to provide recommendations for any non-compliance found does involve citizen participation, but it is limited in nature and includes only four citizen representatives that are extremely well versed in development processes. Both it and the Urban Design & Architecture Advisory Panel allows for resident insight, however both are limited in nature with only in-person meetings allowing for observation and written submitted testimony.

Parking and traffic concerns similarly only allow for written testimony to be directly submitted to the Department of Transportation, with no public meetings. Changes or amendments to the zoning code in relation to proposed development is often the arena that allows for the greatest level of community engagement and involvement. In these instances, the City Council will hold open public hearings before approval or rejection. Similar open meeting requirements are present for Planned Unit Developments or proposed developments for historical landmarks.

BALTIMORE PLANNING ACADEMY

Instead, the city of Baltimore has focused its community engagement and education efforts on broader based city-wide or neighborhood planning efforts. This approach aims to create accountability frameworks that must be adhered to for proposed developments as part of the internal standard review process. The most innovative of these approaches is seen in the Baltimore Planning Academy, established formally in 2018. Open to all Baltimore residents, the free six-week academy aims to build community leadership around urban planning, zoning and development issues specific to Baltimore's 300 neighborhoods. Each session covers a different aspect of urban planning and development, and includes interactive group activities and panel discussions. The curriculum includes a site tour of an existing development project, with a history lesson of proposed community benefits and mitigation efforts included within the development. Curriculum also includes an overview of how developers interact with the city, budgetary and capital investment lessons, and how residents can play a specific role in shaping and altering investments to the public realm tied to development.

The ultimate goals of the Academy are as follows:

- An understanding of zoning principles (eg: "By-Right" development, conditional uses, variances) and how to navigate the zoning code

- How to assess if a neighborhood plan is the right next step for their community

- How to effectively participate in a zoning board or Planning Commission hearing, and the differences in function between these two bodies

BENCHMARKING PRACTICES FOR A80 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The city of Baltimore has focused its engagement efforts on two critical aspects of development review that in and of themselves are not tied to directly to the development review process. In doing so, the city has aimed to create a more consistent and predictable approach to community engagement for proposed development, with limited avenues for direct participation amid specific proposed development.

First, its efforts to update and reimagine the overall city code for the first time in over 45 years served as a broad based community engagement effort that impacts specific development proposals. This was done with the intention of expediting development review and created a more predictable process for new development. Second, the establishment of the Planning Academy has allowed for broad-based community education around development while creating new pockets of communication and coalition building amongst city planners, civic organizations, and residents. By tying engagement and education efforts outside the development review process, Baltimore has sought to create narrower and more specific avenues for community engagement within the review process. These include public city council hearings over specific zoning amendments, and allowable written testimony for the mixed citizen-board of the Planning Commission and the Urban Design & Architecture Advisory Panel, as well as opportunities to lobby specific city agencies with a stake in larger proposed development review processes.

The frameworks for community education and organized advocacy pathways clearly creates more predictability and less contentious public meeting environments. Additionally, if done right, it creates increased power and accountability for citywide and neighborhood plans that in theory should limit the scope and site plans for any proposed development early in a review process. However, with this expedited predictability comes questions of equity and inclusion for residents who are unable to participate in planning education and or activities. The limited scope of engagement pathways and opportunities within a development review process minimizes resident participation to those with the means or ability for high-level education efforts.

As it pertains to the current status of Article 80, goals of broadening community participation would be even more limited under this design. While the Planning Commission contains citizen representatives, they hold limited power. A lack of open public discourse, conversation, or engagement may lead to disparate outcomes that are not aligned with future neighborhood needs if neighborhood planning documents are not adhered to or developed in a specific enough manner to constrain development.

AREA OF IMPACT IN THE A80 PROCESS

If citizen capacity building models are applied to the A80 process they will directly impact pre-file and PNF stages. It will affect engagement on a modular level and the actual engagement touch point in each stage.
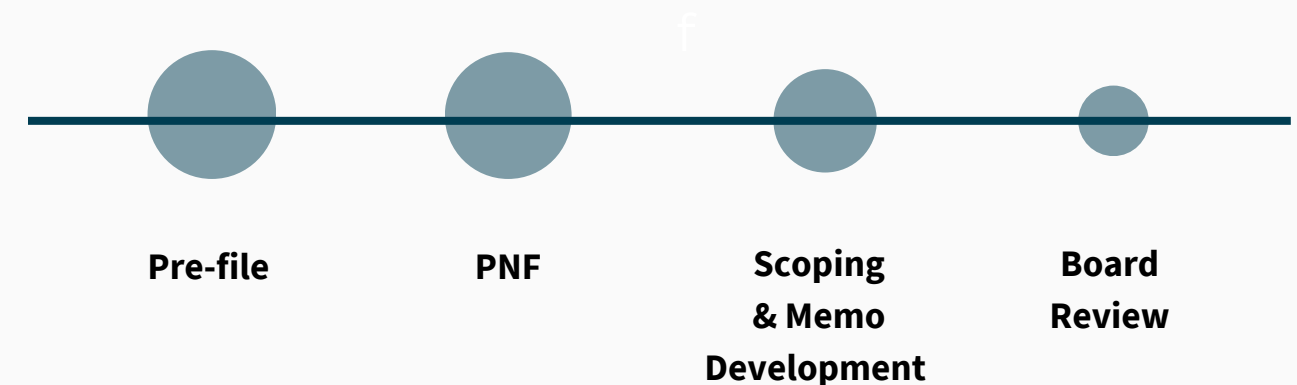
| Pre-file | PNF | Scoping & Memo Development | Board Review |

|	EXISTING CONDITION IN A80	MODELS FOR ENGAGEMENT	OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION TACTICS	ACTIVITIES & COMMUNITY FACING TOUCHPOINTS
Pre-file	In Boston, the level of influence or accountability held by neighborhood planning efforts is difficult to quantify; there exists no formal community education efforts that rest with planning staff or engagement teams, as education conversations are informal	Framework such as the Planning Academy may be able to create pipelines of neighborhood planning efforts that can greater impact expedited development review processes; the mixed citizen-government Planning Commission Board is an example of narrow and focused citizen participation that may expedite development review	Formalized pathways of outreach and communication outside intensive development review processes may be able to activate citizen involvement in a more effective and impactful manner	Opportunities for average citizen community education forums outside specific development review processes is a critical lesson that can strengthen the bonds between government, civic organizations, and residents; holding conversations and building trust in non-contentious environments
PNF	Public Comment Periods are often open to the public prior to intensive interagency review, creating moving targets for development proposals		More reliance on formalized outreach and communication amongst developers and residents as part of the PNF stage is possible; it can be more streamlined if a citizen group is given the sue capacity to lead engagement efforts	Creating activities or forums that require written questions or testimony prior to an event may create a more manageable environment, as opposed to an open Q + A forum for all activities
Scoping & Memo Development	Scoping sessions and internal BPDA review are critical to expediting development processes, but currently lack consistency and struggle to align with prior community insight	Integrating community education models such as the Planning Academy and small planning commission frameworks can focus scoping review sessions to address primary identified policy issues in a more systematic fashion		
Board Review	There is limited community education and knowledge of how to involve themselves in the final board review public comment process	Increased forms of community education can emphasize key touchpoints of public engagement that can impact final board approval	With broader community education, more established channels of outreach can be strengthened and await activation at key points of the development review process	

Vancouver

Case Study 04

Technology driven engagement efforts that diversify civic participation
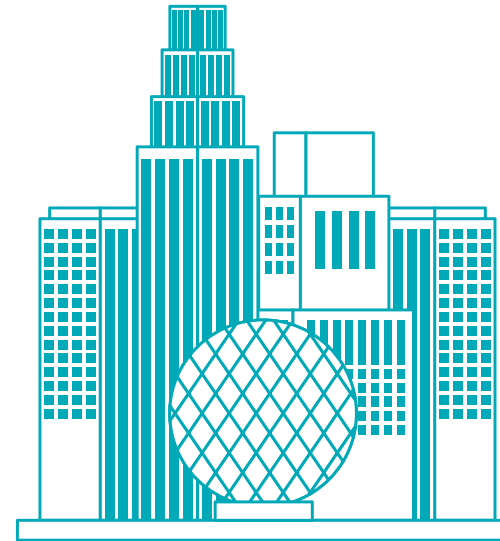
With a population of 662,000 as per the 2021 census, Vancouver witnessed a 4.9% population growth between 2016 and 2021. The city accounts for 25% of the region's population and is the most densely populated municipality in all of Canada. Growth in the future however is projected to be less in Vancouver city and more in the Vancouver metropolitan area which includes the City of Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond and Coquitlam. The population of metro Vancouver is projected to reach 3.8 million by 2050, a 35% increase from its current population of 2.8 million. With an average, annual growth rate of 35,000 people, there will be a need for 500,000 new homes and an average of 17,000 new units every year.

Vancouver's current occupancy rates for housing is the highest in comparison to a range of metro cities in North America. With more stabilized growth in the city but heightened growth in the surrounding region, the focus of urban planning has become innovative forms of transit oriented development that can connect various parts of the metropolitan region's economic hubs. Vancouver has been deemed as one of the best planned cities in the world because of its innovative yet experimental policies shaping public life. The 2050 plan for Vancouver has one of the most extensive engagement efforts across in-person, online and hybrid channels reaching a wide population.

The city has been pioneering the use of civic technology to shape the delivery of services and to diversify public participation. Community centered initiatives such as 'Talk Vancouver' has cultivated a culture of transparency by enabling access to local advisors who share information about key planning initiatives across neighborhoods with residents via passive formats such as newsletters as well as active formats such as phone lines. 'Shape Vancouver' similarly is a digital platform dedicated to community participation in city level planning initiatives.

CONTEXT

662K *Total population*

5.9K *Building Permits in 2022*

2022 *Update to zoning development by-law*

2022 *Vancouver 2050 Plan Approved*

2021 *Development Process Redesign*

KEY TACTICS

Vancouver's collaborative infrastructure governance model stands out as a systemic intervention that fosters jointly funded infrastructure projects, involving multiple players, both public and private

The framework utilized for community engagement that took place as part of the 2050 Vancouver Plan influenced the diversity of engagement touchpoints, bringing in a mix of high-touch and low-touch engagement points to people

Within the use of digital platforms for community engagement, there is a mix of activities for outreach, community opinion giving, and continuous documentation of feedback on projects, often not limited to a timeline

Communication strategies and not just mediums are points of innovation. The Planning Department has used a range of different visual and animation tools to communicate complex policy changes an easy to understand manner with the public
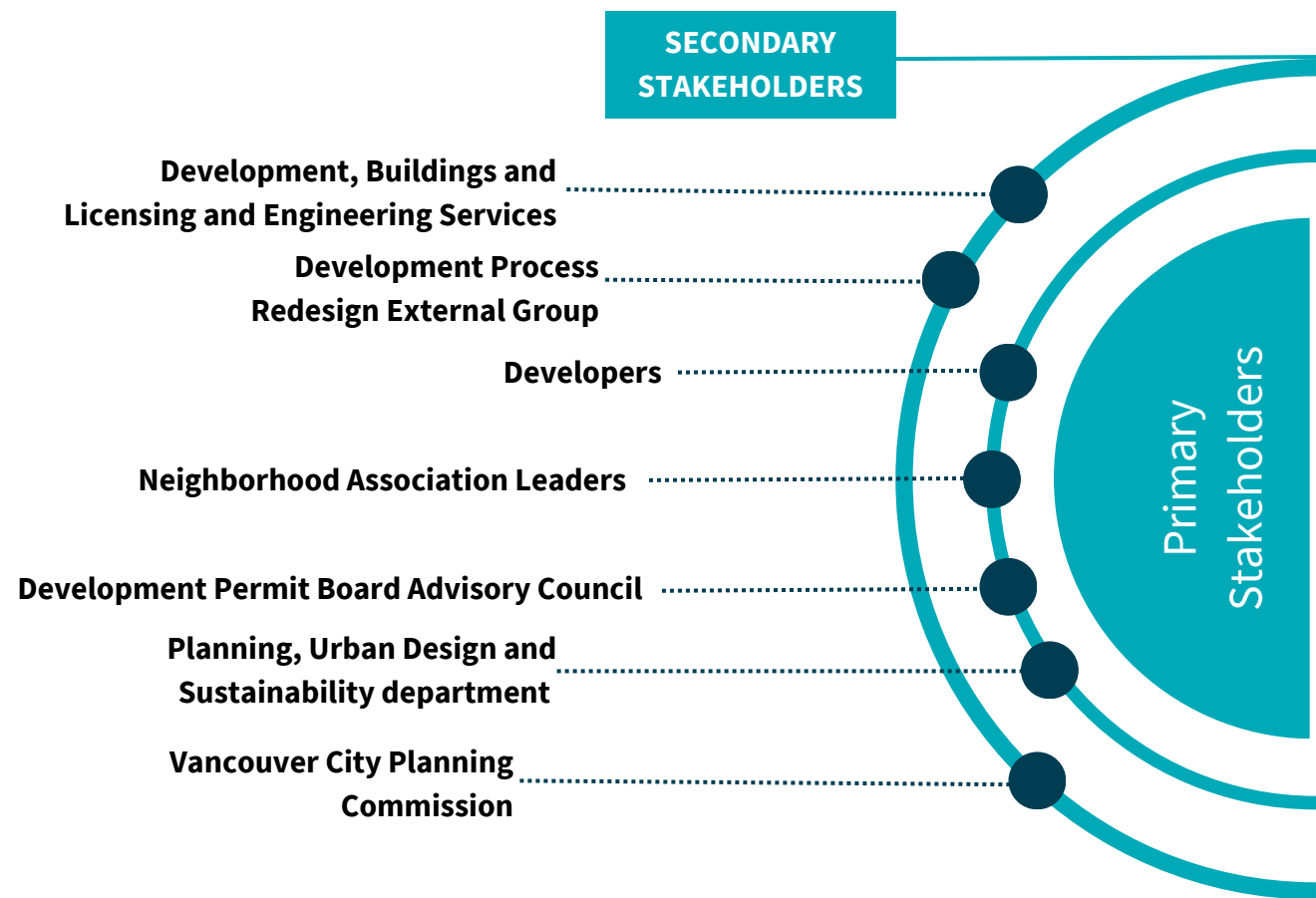
KEY TACTICS RELEVANT TO A80

A combination of pre-existing digital tools and originally developed platforms can be used for diversifying community participation and have a mix of high and low touch engagement points throughout the review process

Digital platforms such as the BPDA digital library in the A80 process currently serves as an archive of records from engagement events. Talk Vancouver and Shape Vancouver are examples of how digital-first engagement methods can be positioned as a resource such as a database and a interaction point with community members

If a multi-pronged approach to engagement is applied to digital platforms it can diversify resident participation. Residents have the option to record a voice note on their feedback, answer a poll or leave a comment. It can yield a diversity of responses from various resident groups

Pilot effective narrative strategies for development on a city-level and a neighborhood-level. The Vancouver Plan for example simplifies ideas and insights into three categories eg: three foundation principles, three big ideas (areas of focus) and three policy directions. This made communication about complex planning initiatives easier to understand and follow

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

Development, Buildings and Licensing and Engineering Services

Development Process Redesign External Group

Developers

Neighborhood Association Leaders

Development Permit Board Advisory Council

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability department

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Primary Stakeholders

KEY STAKEHOLDERS SHAPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Neighborhood Association Leaders often collaborate and apply their understanding of local communities in the development of engagement points. The development of a digital-first engagement tactic is a multi-stakeholder effort often spearheaded by the Vancouver City Planning Commission. In 2021, the city initiated the Development Process Redesign which is similar to the A80 modernization effort in Boston. With the intention of making it easier for various stakeholders to apply for development permits and create sustainable forms of community engagement, the external group associated with the process has become an important secondary stakeholder influencing engagement.

The Development Permit Board Advisory Council is a citizen committee similar to the IAG in Boston and is involved in the final stages of the development review process. The Advisory Council holds a lot of power and influences how the review process proceeds. Various committees work with staff in the Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability department to ensure development efforts reflect Vancouver's 2050 goals of 1) complete, connected neighborhoods 2) More housing options 3) Support for businesses and 4) addressing the climate crisis and restoring ecosystems.

BENCHMARKING PRACTICES FOR A80 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Vancouver's engagement strategies use a combination of adaptable digital tools for civic engagement and the creation of original, digital-first portals such 'Talk Vancouver' to engage with different groups of residents. Digital-first approaches have helped the city government diversify their engagement points and therefore diversify who participates in various engagement activities. 'Talk Vancouver' for example is an initiative that allows residents to first connect with local advisors to learn about specific initiatives and activates a series of channels such as helplines or call in times and passive channels such as newsletters, flyering, and radio. The model as a whole adapts to barriers such as time constraints, language proficiency, and mobility constraints while generating community feedback.

Each effective engagement effort is dependent on a multi-pronged approach for outreach and communication tactics. One of the reasons A80 community engagement is not seeing a desired growing diversity in resident participation is because mediums for outreach and communication are limited to traditional newspaper advertising. Vancouver's strategy behind different engagement efforts provides key action steps for BPDA. Once mediums are diversified, the information sharing has been made more effective. Changes made to complex planning policies such as zoning reforms are explained via easy to understand animated videos and visual content.

AREA OF IMPACT IN THE A80 PROCESS

Key tactics from Vancouver can impact engagement on an activity level within the PNF and Scoping and Memo Development Stages of the A80 process
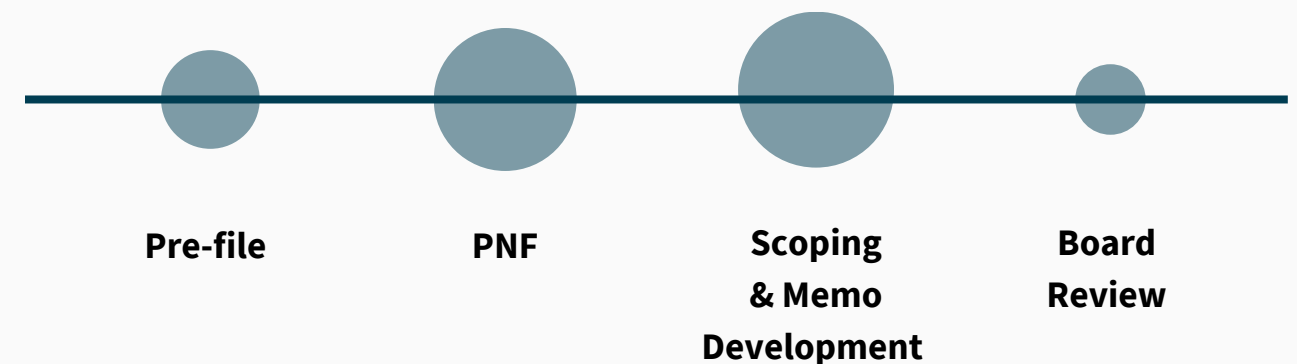
Pre-file   PNF   Scoping & Memo Development   Board Review

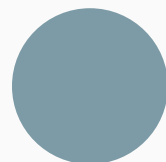|	EXISTING CONDITION IN A80	MODELS FOR ENGAGEMENT	OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION TACTICS	ACTIVITIES & COMMUNITY FACING TOUCHPOINTS
Pre-file	Limited documentation of conversations and decisions made in the pre-file stage	Position key community facing staff in the BPDA as local advisors to community members and the developers. Consolidate efforts on one digital platforms that allows for residents to gain easy access to CEMs and such that the interactions can be documented		
PNF	Public comments is the only engagement touchpoint that is documented in a standardized way A singular medium is active for residents to submit comments & long form letters		Spread awareness about the new mediums for submitting public comments via social media, radio, and easy access QR codes in public spaces	Diversify the ways in which public comments are submitted, open up responses to be letters, polls, surveys, voice recordings and more
Scoping & Memo Development	Public meetings follow a singular format - large group presentations, hybrid formats have yielded attendance but not purposeful engagement		Transition to visually heavy, communication styles that rely on a flow of information and a simple narrative that explains complex project updates Use visually heavy communication materials to set new standards for access to information and transparency of information	Depending on the agenda of a public meeting, a strategic decision can be made on the channel of engagement. A mitigation meeting can be more productive in a small group discussion format while a community vision session might also be effective via call in numbers or surveys to widen participation
Board Review	While a call for final feedback is released in newspapers, mediums for sending in feedback or voicing final points of views remains unclear			Re-center expertise of local advisors and create space for community centric discussion in the final board review

Philadelphia

Case Study 05

Developing conditions for equity across various engagement touch points

Philadelphia is one of the most populous cities in the United States. Yet like most large cities, it has been losing population over the past three years. In 2022, Philadelphia lost 36,000 of its residents; however housing and new development in the city is soaring. The past year, the city added 5853 units of housing, 90% of which were multi-unit residential buildings. 75% of all new housing development is concentrated in the Center City Neighborhood of Philadelphia. The city's 2035 Plan has a core goal of renewing various open spaces in the city and therefore increasing the utilization of the public realm. The city expects to bring back population to its core and build an experience and service infrastructure that can accommodate the same.

The government's efforts are to restore confidence in the city's development story, but some of its greatest challenges remain rising housing costs, slowing economy, and a high poverty rate that has remained constant over decades. With a 11% increase in the population with a college degree in the city, a dropping unemployment rate, and rising median income by education level, the city is witnessing a reinvestment in public life.

Community engagement efforts in development and planning need to consider that the city has 28% of its residents below poverty with a considerable increase in immigrant families. The approach to equity has considered various situational factors that shape engagement efforts, where they take place, and in what form. The Philadelphia Service Design Studio has led the development and activation of an equitable engagement toolkit for development and planning initiatives. It has the expertise for applying people centered design mindsets and skills to reimagine the experience of civic services. This makes the toolkit robust and centered on the different realities of the priority resident groups.

CONTEXT

1.57 *MILLION Total population*

10.2K *Building Permits in 2021*

2022 *Updates to Zoning Codes*

2011 *Philadelphia 2035 Plan Approved*

KEY TACTICS

Philadelphia Service Design Studio along with the Mayor's Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service led the development of an Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit that focuses on creating creating equitable conditions for participation

The Plan, Philadelphia's 2035 plan focuses in equal amount on connectivity within the city and repurposing various aspects of the public realm as a way of building confidence in the city's future

The government designated a Civic Design Review (CDR), a separate channel for the review of large-scale development projects
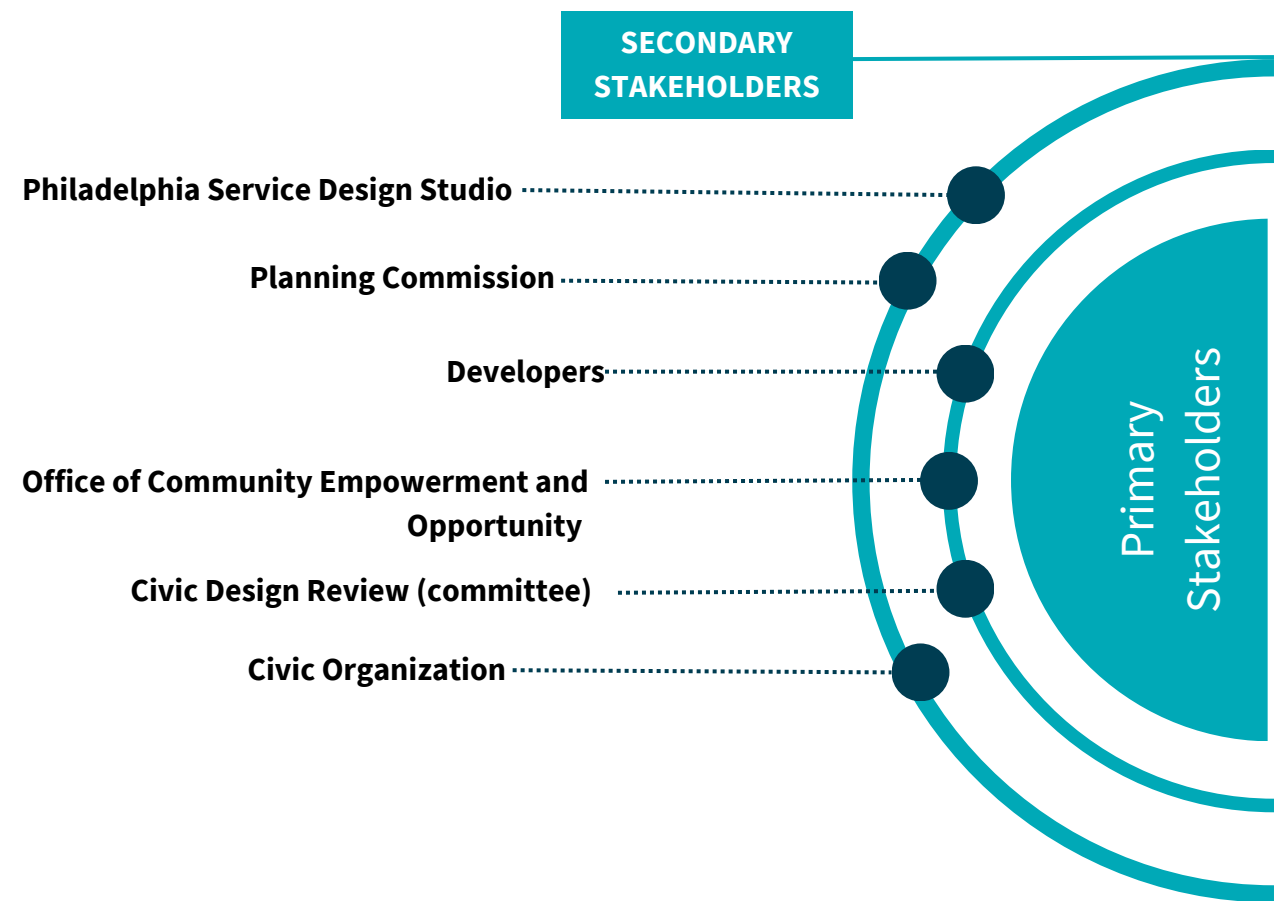
KEY TACTICS RELEVANT TO A80

The development of the Equitable Community Engagement toolkit took place by collaborating with 150 stakeholders inside and outside of municipal government: 31 unique community-based engagement practitioners affiliated with over 25 local organizations, 51 unique community residents, 68 engagement practitioners across 35 agencies, including 11 city leaders who served as advisors

The tool kit is broken down into digestible parts based on the needs of the target population and is a way for the government and the civil society organizations to work together on public realm projects

With heightened development projects in the city the toolkit is a foundational resource for guiding engagement strategies but also facilitation at the point of engagement

Each part of the toolkit has a purpose and it is clearly articulated at the start of the section. There is a transparency in the process and rationale behind specific goals

Unlike other community engagement resources, the toolkit takes a more comprehensive approach for understanding the realities of various target population groups and makes resultant engagement strategies more adaptable

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

Philadelphia Service Design Studio

Planning Commission

Developers

Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity

Civic Design Review (committee)

Civic Organization

Primary Stakeholders

KEY STAKEHOLDERS SHAPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity is an umbrella organization that guides community engagement efforts across the City of Philadelphia. The organization has the responsibility in designing and implementing outreach programs such as Serve Philadelphia VISTA Corps, and the Civic Engagement Academy. It therefore also influences the engagement efforts that take place as part of the city's development review process. For large project development, the CDR consists of community representatives and is responsible for organizing public forums between the developers and community members.

Within secondary stakeholders, civic engagement organizations have been involved in the design of engagement strategies, however there is little documentation on their influence on the development projects themselves. New city offices such as the Service Design Studio that is housed within the Office of Chief Administrative Officer apply human centered design principles to make access to various civic services including housing, public space, education etc more equitable. Their involvement with the development of the equitable engagement toolkit makes them a key stakeholder influencing people centric engagement in the city.

BENCHMARKING PRACTICES FOR A80 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Equity in development and growth is a challenge faced by cities globally. Community engagement within the development review process is an opportunity to build equity within the larger process. Philadelphia Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit is a more layered resource, considering situational factors that influences *how* equity can be cultivated given the existing conditions of a community. The approach takes a step back to understand what might be needed for an engagement effort to be truly equitable. Creating the conditions for equity is then explored through the lens of power, mindsets and resources. Guides under each of these sub-themes have a specific purpose;

Power: *Understand how identities and lived experiences influence access to power, Understand how to positively share power with communities*

Mindset: *Understand the difference between individual practices and institutional conditions, Understand your mindsets and where they come from, Understand how equity mindsets shape engagements*

Resources: *Understand how to plan a budget for your engagement, Understand how to plan staff collaboration in your engagement, Understand how to plan your time before your engagement*

Using the Equitable Community Engagement toolkit as a benchmarking practice can immediately inform the design of various outreach efforts and the engagement activities within the A80 process. While the toolkit can be viewed as a model, its application to the A80 process is tactical, on an activity level.

AREA OF IMPACT IN THE A80 PROCESS

Key tactics from Philadelphia can influence engagement efforts on an activity level with immediate impact in the scoping and memo development phase of the A80 process.
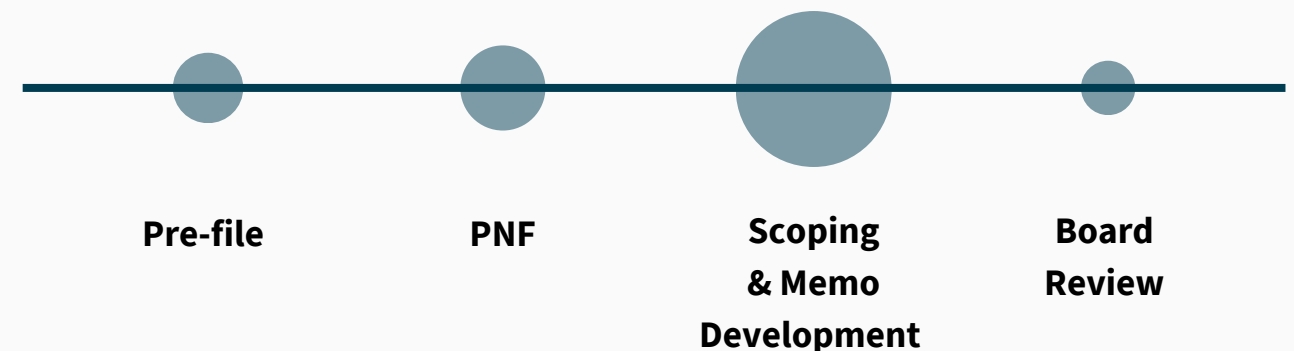
| Pre-file | PNF | Scoping & Memo Development | Board Review |

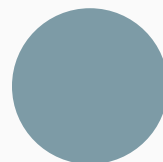|	EXISTING CONDITION IN A80	MODELS FOR ENGAGEMENT	OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION TACTICS	ACTIVITIES & COMMUNITY FACING TOUCHPOINTS
Pre-file	Potential for creating alignment and shared language across stakeholder groups	Orienting teams, adjacent city agencies and citizen committees about the Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit. A capacity building effort in collaboration with the Philadelphia Service Design Studio can be considered		
PNF	Public comments are only submitted via long-form letters. Reaches only the highly engaged, English speaking audiences			Digital first mediums can be used to diversify ways of first encouraging feedback and second, diversifying the format in which the feedback is received and considered
Scoping & Memo Development	Singular format for public meetings across neighborhoods Currently the IAG or the committee spearheading the engagement does not have a framework or guideline for facilitation	Engagement touchpoints for on creating conditions for equity considering themes of; Mindsets, Power and Resources	A foundational guide developed in collaboration with community facing stakeholders can govern public meetings and processes	Key points from toolkit can be further broken down based on the stage of the development review process and the type of engagement For example: Greater emphasis may need to be given to resource allocation and budgeting at the stage of mitigation and benefits negotiation
Board Review	Documentation of the final decision and recommended next steps can be documented equitably		Each renewed touchpoint will need a feedback loop that is also considering aspects of equity; eg - are updates communicated via more than one medium	

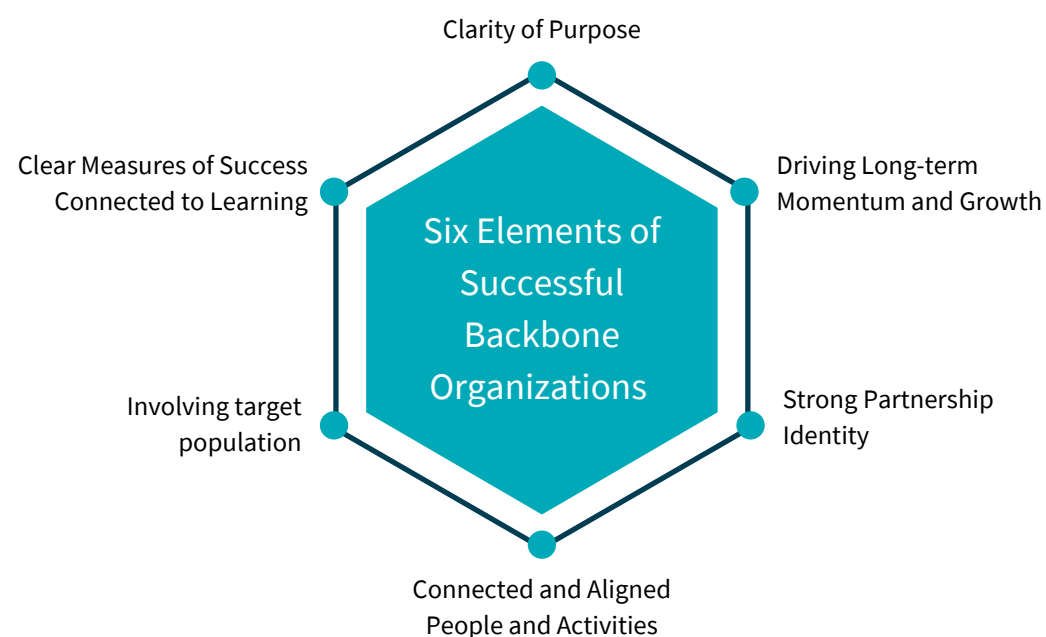# Innovative Approaches to Engagement

- Backbone Organizations

- Human-Centered Facilitation

- Civic-Tech Enabled Engagement

Backbone Organization

SCOPE OF WORK

A Backbone Organization is a form of multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together key stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors to work together on a core purpose. In the context of community engagement, the model presents us with a way of imagining engagement as not just touch points but as a foundational way of working. Various forms of community-led urban design projects have utilized the model of a backbone organization as a way of first tapping into local knowledge and connecting place-based experiences with resources such as architects, urban designers, and civic organizations.

The model is developed by an anchor organization that brings together different stakeholder groups and orients them towards a key vision. Backbone organizations in urban design and planning have developed interventions on the scale of a neighborhood and a more micro scale of a building or a public space within the neighborhood. A Stanford Social Innovation Review analysis presents six key characteristics of successful Backbone Organizations.

Clarity of Purpose

Clear Measures of Success Connected to Learning

Driving Long-term Momentum and Growth

Six Elements of Successful Backbone Organizations

Involving target population

Strong Partnership Identity

Connected and Aligned People and Activities

UNDERSTANDING THE MODEL

- **Clarity of Purpose** - *this is fueled by persistent and engaging communication that the anchor organization creates within partner organizations as a way of articulating the purpose at various stages of the projects*

- **Driving Long-term Momentum and Growth** - *a strong ROI narrative, a communication about how partnership creates a strong, concise story for individual partners*

- **Strong Partnership Identity** - *developing a core identity of the 'organization' such that community outreach and communications remain aligned with core purpose of the engagement*

- **Connected and Aligned People and Activities** - *clearly defined roles and degree of involvement of different partners as a method of avoiding reporting fatigue*

- **Involving target population** - *setting clear milestones with the target population such that the engagement is with core elements of the project such as visioning, design concept, mapping or embodied experiences of the final design or development*

- **Clear Measures of Success Connected to Learning** - *communicating progress updates within program teams but also with community members. At various stages of the process, questioning what are the information gaps community members can help fill?*

EXAMPLE: URBAN DESIGN FORUM

The Urban Design Forum (UDF) is a 40-year-old organization in New York City with a focus on improving the public realm across neighborhoods in New York by cultivating strong local partnerships. It brings together stakeholders across the sector with empirical knowledge and understanding of the local context where the public realm project is located. UDF launches public programs every 6 months to a year and selects a class of fellows to curate the programmatic efforts, roles and responsibilities and the final outcomes of the initiative. Fellows are usually locally based civil society advocates, architects, planners and urbanists. Each effort has its own identity and encourages regular dialogue with the public.

The most recent program, Rewire, brings together ecologists, urban design, development and community stewards to advance ideas that make the built environment more climate resilient. Programs such as Rewire last for a year and activate various kinds of engagement with the public. In this case a call for working groups was made public for people to participate in collecting research, touring neighborhoods, and interviewing stakeholders to influence the larger project. Public participation in programs therefore becomes a foundational element for the design and execution of new public realm ideas.

RELEVANCE TO A80

The model of a backbone organization can inspire approaches to engagement for a community-led development project, especially for institutional development. Large-scale institutions, be them educational or medical, serve as key centralized forms of civic life within Boston neighborhoods, and have an outsized influence on the public realm for average residents. Those dynamics and relationships serve as some of the most important factors that drive community planning and engagement across the city. Often, those planning initiatives are contentious and replicate broader engagement efforts that struggle to diversify community voice within the long-term land use planning efforts of these critical city institutions. If a working group or a set of community stewards collaborate with institutional development teams on specific projects affecting the neighborhood public realm, it can shape various aspects of the experience design. Building such an engagement model for institutional development will also enable more communication channels with community members and a method for tracking project progress.

Institutional development projects and the current two-year renewal process can prevent even engaged community members from tracking changes in a project. Developing a unique identity for projects and aligning subsequent communications and call to action for engagement can also enable transparency through co-creation.
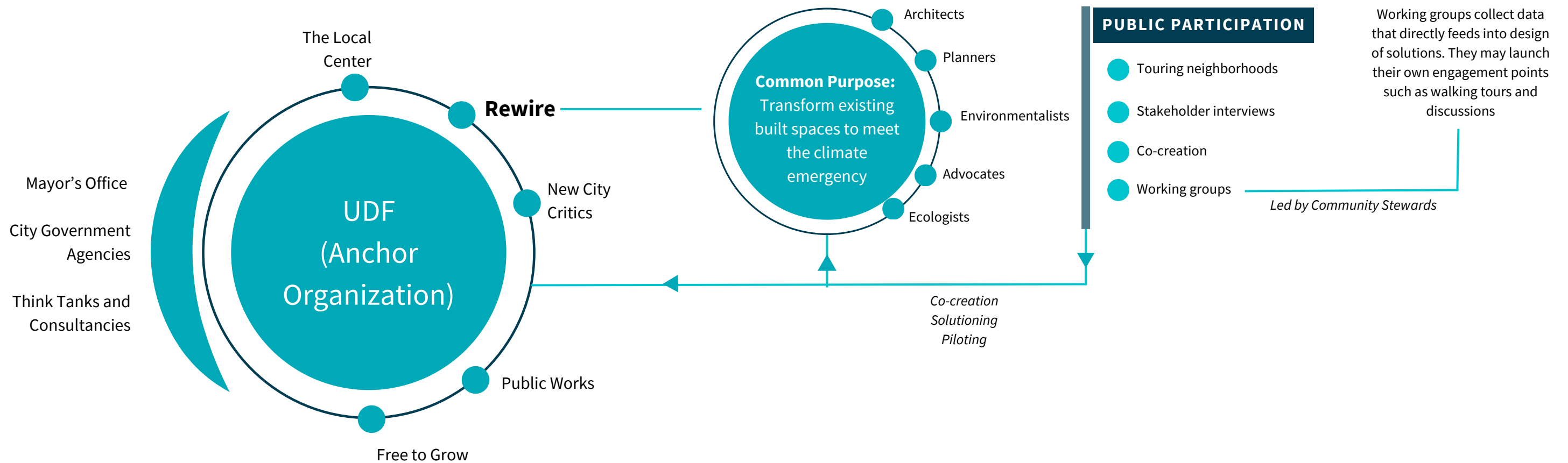
Human-centered Facilitation

SCOPE OF WORK

Human-centered design is an evolving practice that centers the end-user's lived experiences in the creation of an end-product, be it a product, service or even a new policy. It was theorized as an area of work particularly in the domain of industrial and product design however the principles are applied actively in the social sciences, policy and impact spaces today.

Each human-centric effort understands the resource context of the population, their aspirations and desires more than just need from a project in order to foster an engagement process rooted in contextual realities. The evolution of the human centric design process, especially in the case of social impact design has enabled participatory facilitation formats that also help reach hard to reach population groups.

Human centricity was brought to light as an emergent value within the BPDA during the operational review process. One of the most actionable methods of applying a human centric lens is through the design and facilitation of community engagement activities. Facilitation of engagement touch-points through such a lens will need teams to create more embodied experiences for gathering community feedback such as neighborhood walks or site visits. They will also encourage the communication of key concepts and their related probes through visualized, often gamified formats that create generative conversations.

EXAMPLE: SOCIAL DESIGN COLLABORATIVE

NEW DELHI, INDIA

The Social Design Collaborative is a New Delhi based art and architecture practice that uses a combination of games and collaborative exercises to speak with resource constrained populations about complex social issues. Their facilitation techniques for public realm projects can inspire best practices for collaboration with priority resident groups elsewhere in the world.

Exercises such as modular floor plans and mapping using cardboard for example produces low fidelity prototypes that can initiate and guide a community-led design process. At the same time information cards and trading games are used to understand prioritized needs and wants for community groups. Each facilitation style centers the community member's experience and their reality.

Approaches to the conversations are made accessible through not only their format but the design of each individual material. The cards for example may have the type in English but it substitutes the information with graphic iconography for the non-english speaking populations to understand the area of focus.

Collaborative forms of facilitation help transcend language barriers but more importantly it provides people with multiple mediums for communicating their ideas or thoughts. The examples above add tactility to idea development and reduces dependence on speech as the only way of communicating.
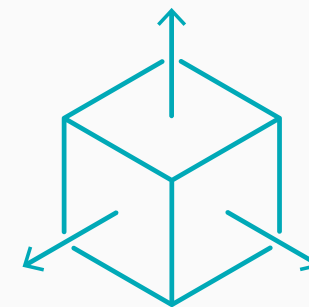
Low Fidelity
Prototyping
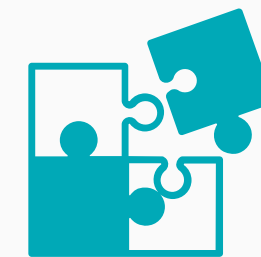
Gamifying
Complex Concepts

Co-creation and
Resource Building

Hands on
Mapping

EXAMPLE: CHINATOWN VISIONING & PLACEKEEPING

BOSTON, MA

Within Boston innovative community engagement approaches have been piloted in neighborhood visioning and planning efforts. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) partnered with the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC) and artists associated with the Residence Lab, a creative placemaking program to activate the idea of a Story Cart as part of the community visioning exercise. Similar to a pop-up library, the Story Cart is a civic infrastructure that highlights people's stories and experiences about the neighborhood. The effort not only becomes a part of the civic infrastructure in the neighborhood, but it enables voices to surface by moving beyond a meeting space and into the public realm. The effort was funded by MAPC through a combination of public and private funds that help experimental intervention become more sustainable.

Complementing this effort MAPC also activated helplines, residents of Chinatown could call in and record their vision for the neighborhood in the language they are most comfortable in. The helpline ensured working populations, often in the services sector with longer work hours are able to participate in the process. A curation of this database also greatly influenced the foundational inputs that shaped the community and cultural plan.

RELEVANCE TO A80

Human centered facilitation takes place when engagement efforts are designed centering the realities of the target population. In the case of the development review process, there is tremendous scope for efforts to adopt new formats of discussions and reduce the dependence of formal meetings. If in-person public meetings are to be held, there are a plethora of activities that can encourage co-creation and ideation in the process. The current discussions in the development review meeting are reliant on a formal presentation and is a passive format of engagement. If new ways of approaching mitigation and community benefits are to be activated, there need to be diverse mediums for participants to express their opinions.

Call in numbers, probes in the public spaces and various other low-touch, high impact engagement points will widen the population engagement efforts are able to reach. Secondly, mediums such as call in numbers can be effective for residents to submit public comments. One can simply call in to record their opinion about a new development project in their neighborhood versus sending a formal letter. A combination of live events and interaction points can ensure engagement allows for diverse voices to be heard. In the process it will initiate a cycle of trust building between BPDA and the community.

Residence Lab

Funding sources that are a combination of public and private funds . Funding channels are often diverse and open opportunities for public-private partnerships.

Metropolitan Area Planning Commission

Asian Community Development Corporation

A creative placemaking program that partners with local artists

Development of creative engagement efforts that break formal meeting formats and create engagement through the public realm

Priority Resident Population

Civic-tech Enabled Engagement

SCOPE OF WORK

The Civic-Tech landscape is split into two broad categories of community action and open government models. With several services and organizations within each category the models focus on top-down and bottom-up approaches to governance. Areas of focus within open government models include those that collect resident feedback, data transparency, data visualization and access as well as voting. While community action models focus on people to people, local sharing, information sourcing and neighborhood forums amongst others.

City agencies, such as the BPDA are positioned to combine the top-down and bottom-up approaches for influencing planning and development on a neighborhood level. Civic-tech platforms as a result can be a medium for organizing multi-stakeholder efforts that influence engagement and therefore planning. The BPDA A80 Digital Records Library for instance is a form of a civic-tech platform that is trying to promote transparency in development efforts. The effort however is siloed and underutilized as a resource by primary users of the development review process such as the developers themselves but is further underutilized by priority resident populations and civic organizations.

The design and implementation of civic-tech solutions by the government need to imagine the purpose of the platform and the role different stakeholders can play in order to grow it as a resource. The digital library for example can be envisioned to serve multiple purposes as it grows but it will need the inputs of different stakeholder groups in order to evolve.

EXAMPLE: Engage PGH

PITTSBURG, PA

The Pittsburg Government wanted to create a consistent and trust-building public input experience across its various planning efforts. By activating engagement efforts using the Social Pinpoint platform, it was able to execute 150 digital and hybrid engagement points as part of the Engage PGH effort. Engagement via this strategy has led to more than half of the city's population participating in planning efforts. Projects ranging from new development to community visioning to public space design are made available to the public for participation. Feedback is collected in the form of quick polls, sharing of opinions via voice messages and even through online and hybrid neighborhood forums.

The strategy behind a digital solution for engagement remains multi-pronged in order to bridge digital divides, information asymmetry and logistical constraints that come in the way of effective engagement. The functionality of the Engage PGH platform is further enhanced via easy to understand filters and a design that enables the interface to adapt to differently-abled people. As the platform evolved it serves as a critical database for the city, civil society and residents themselves but it is also a critical interaction point for collecting feedback and activating feedback loops with the public.
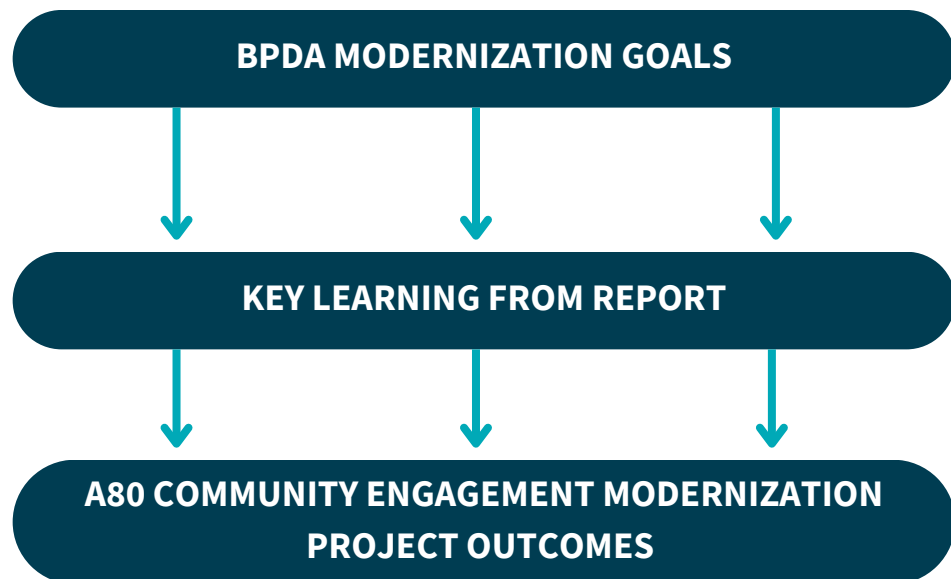
RELEVANCE TO A80

The BPDA has the foundational technology in place to make the development review process more transparent and therefore more predictable to the public. The current digital library is in a stage of growth from being just a database to an interaction point with the public. Effectiveness of engagement efforts will only improve when there are persistent feedback loops with community members, resources available for civic organizations to communicate with the public and when there is a knowledge infrastructure with a strong communication strategy that would help with its utilization. These are multi-fold goals that can be targeted and worked via a comprehensive technology-led civic engagement that remains multi-stakeholder.

Conclusion

The overarching goal of the A80 Modernization process in Boston is to encourage growth and development in the city while creating a predictable review process experience for the community. Success at the end of the modernization process is viewed as development that advances affordability, equity and resilience across Boston. It is therefore dependent on effective and intentional community engagement being a core element for equitable development. This requires the A80 process to cultivate community engagement touch points that are transparent and easy to engage with for all segments of the city's population. Finally, modernization would mean that the development review process speaks to the planning goals of each neighborhood and also reflects an updated zoning code. This currently is a critical bureaucratic bottleneck in the development review process and one reason for instances of community distrust regarding development review in the city.

The examples shared in this report relate back to each of the overarching goals of the A80 Modernization effort and provide action steps and ways forward for process operations, stakeholders, and the public facing touch points themselves.

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│     KEY LEARNING FROM REPORT     │
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│  A80 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT        │
│  MODERNIZATION PROJECT OUTCOMES  │
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OPERATIONS & PROCESSES

KEY TAGS

Baltimore Planning Academy and Toronto Planning Review Panel for capacity building

Elements of Successful Backbone Organizations as framework for operational planning

Some of the key operational and process outcomes for the A80 community engagement project are to ensure there is a transference of community centered knowledge between teams in the BPDA as well as across key city agencies. At the same time, there is a need for a shared language about the development review process between community facing stakeholders such as the BPDA Community Engagement Managers (CEMs) and the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) neighborhood liaisons and the development review Project Managers. Organizational capacity building needs are therefore central for sustainable and effective community engagement. Tools, best practices, and guidelines for conducting engagement efforts are currently lacking in this process and can be the essential element for building a more transparent and predictable process.

Any new engagement model will need to be supported via shared capacities between multiple stakeholders. The six elements of a successful backbone organization can be an effective framework to ensure that multi-stakeholder engagements such as development review community engagement are effective and purposeful. Indicators such as Seattle's urban village indicator are examples of development and planning metrics that can influence methods of outreach and the facilitation of engagement activities across neighborhoods. Core engagement models such as the Toronto Planning Review Panel and the Baltimore Planning Academy offer planning education to residents, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to make committees more effective. The capacity building efforts ensure participants are aligned on specific goals and have a standardized way of engaging and shaping development efforts.

The work and strategies needed to diversify the audiences involved in development review engagement structures is difficult and time-consuming. Similarly, the ability to create new processes that ensure accountability coming out of community development conversations is paramount to building trust between city staff, neighborhood advocates, and residents. Ultimately, the long-term goal of designing and implementing broader-based community education programming can create opportunities for the BPDA to design more predictable and consistent spaces for community insight. As it stands now, an extremely small number of Boston residents contain the time, capacity, and knowledge to serve in the current engagement structure that Article 80 offers. Diversifying that pool of residents while narrowing the scope and responsibilities held by current active resident advocates is a potential formula for success. It holds the potential to deepen the lived experience of those involved in the development review process, while creating more predictable operational frameworks for when community engagement is truly needed.

STAKEHOLDER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITY

KEY TAGS

- Talk Vancouver as engagement efforts centering community knowledge
- Seattle's Early Engagement Model for involving civic organizations
- Toronto Planning Review Panel for Empowered Decision Making

Community Engagement Managers use adaptive strategies for engaging with community members based on their understanding of the community and relationships they have built with community organizations. This knowledge needs to be recentered if engagement points are to utilize new channels of communication, activate feedback loops, and diversify resident participation. On the backend, knowledge needs to be documented such that it can be actively shared within teams in the BPDA. At the end of this project, it will be important to resource CEMs to actualize specific recommendations that shape the design and execution of different engagement touch points. The DR Project Managers on the other hand will need to step into the role of a mediator at various points in the process in order to move the process forward. One such evolution of the role would be to mediate engagement between developers and the community members.

Renewed engagement points as part of the development review process will not only change roles stakeholders play within the BPDA but those outside the department as well. If the process takes inspiration from Seattle's Early Engagement model, the role of key civic organizations along with developers are primary stakeholders that shape development projects. The city government strategized to bring the engagement efforts of the developer into the development review process. This would be a big stride in ensuring transparency and can center documented community inputs from the pre-file stage. Vancouver also centered community centric knowledge as part of its planning initiatives through 'Talk Vancouver' and 'Shape your City' engagement by connecting community members and local experts, similar to neighborhood liaisons.

In essence, Seattle's early engagement model is an effort to bridge the community gap between planning and development review. While both are necessary separate entities, forms of intentional early engagement is a strategy to hold the development community accountable to longstanding engagement and planning conversations that will always exist prior and parallel to ongoing development efforts. Formalizing the relationship and responsibilities held between CEMs, DR project managers, development interests, and residents is critical to bridging this gap for larger development projects that are likely to cause bigger externalities, be them positive or negative.

As of now, IAG or taskforce members respond to largely baked-in proposals that may or may not reflect conversations held by a development team within neighborhoods. Instead of developers checking the box of the neighborhood association circuit, what formal BPDA/resident entities could be created for early engagement opportunities that are predictable, consistent, and in line with the needs of the BPDA to move projects forward? As it stands, IAGs are a reactionary body. Creating stakeholder frameworks that instead promote longer-term relationship building between all these entities could create a more predictable environment for all involved.

PUBLIC FACING TOUCH POINTS

KEY TAGS

- Vancouver and Toronto's use of civic-tech
- Human Centered Facilitation for public meetings for priority resident groups
- Philadelphia's Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit as an open source resource

Equitable engagement touchpoints need to take into account different realities of population groups in Boston when being designed and facilitated. The public comments period for example needs to develop a format that reaches populations wanting to be in community and contribute in languages other than english. It also needs to become a touch point that is more self guided to grow participation. Currently touch points such as public meetings are facilitated by different stakeholders at different points, and the community engagement modernization will need to foster guidelines that ensure a clarity of roles and standardized facilitation practices across engagement points. Digital-first channels for facilitation can also ensure there is a mix of high-touch and low-touch engagement throughout the process. This will also help surface voices across different population groups and levels of engagement.

Vancouver has developed various digital-first engagement points and Toronto has made strategic use of platforms such as Social Pinpoint to engage residents. Engagement efforts driven by technology nonetheless ensure that there are multiple ways for audiences to participate whether it is through a survey, quick poll, or call in option. The diversity of channels cultivates more diversity in participant engagement. Philadelphia's Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit on the other hand is an open source resource that can be adapted to design in-person engagement points that focus on the realities of the populations and develops conditions for equity.

This could mean making meeting formats less formal, with smaller groups or being co-facilitated with civic organizations who often communicate with specific groups. Human Centered facilitation examples can further complement efforts by reducing dependence on a passive presentation style format and using meeting time as a space for co-creation.

Whether it is through new technological platforms that broaden and expedite community feedback, or alternative forms of public meeting facilitation that move past the current paradigm of slide decks and Q & As, there must be a strategy and vision for when and why alternative public facing touch points are deployed. For projects that surpass a certain size threshold, it may be prudent to implement a standard practice of broader technological deployment to reach the largest audience possible. For institutional master plans, a requirement to hold a series of smaller facilitated conversations involving a predetermined list of key neighborhood association and advocacy groups may be appropriate. If a new life sciences building is being proposed, what smaller community sessions can be held with local residents to recommend potential educational or local employment pipelines that utilize grassroots connections to promote such benefits? The use of both new technological platforms and a menu of facilitation approaches is needed to promote flexibility and innovation past the traditional structure of of often contentious and unorganized public meetings.

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