Reconnecting Red Hook
Tools to Support Community Engagement & Advocacy in Red Hook, Brooklyn

PortSide New York X Pratt GCPE
Spring 2024

Pratt GCPE

Contents

Project Team

GCPE Project Team
Emma Bartley
Jack Holmes
Aqsa Modak
Lucy Pidcock Bruggeman
Sydney Tiemann
Ben Werner
Minal Yellewar

Faculty
Beth Bingham, Faculty

Community Lead
Carolina Salguero, PortSide New York

Introduction

This toolkit is designed to support Red Hook community members and PortSide leadership in neighborhood organizing and planning processes. Informed by our own research and conversations with Red Hook community members, this toolkit opens with an assessment of the neighborhood's needs and opportunities. It then offers a series of participatory engagement tools for both PortSide and broader Red Hook to use. These tools aim to generate local conversations about key neighborhood issues and to encourage participatory planning.

In the early 1990s, Red Hook underwent a participatory planning process that resulted in Brooklyn Community Board 6's 197-a plan, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*. The plan addressed many neighborhood needs at the time. Building off of that precedent, we believe our recommendations could support a similar community-wide planning initiative for the future of Red Hook.

Study Area

★ *PortSide (Mary A Whalen)*

Source: *New York Times*
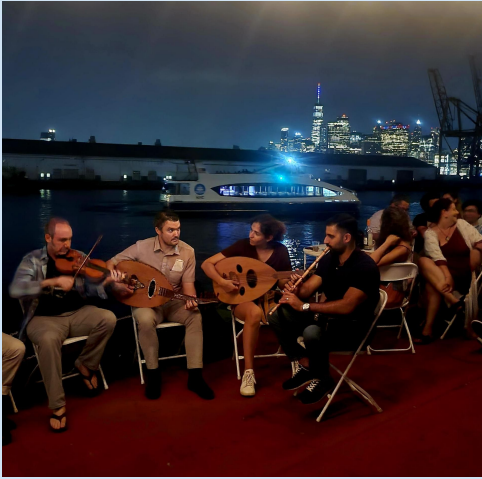
Community Needs & Strengths

Community Needs & Opportunities Assessment

Projects Impacting Red Hook

There are numerous public processes ongoing in Red Hook. These are just some of the issues we discussed over the course of our 10-week class.

Community offshore wind
Community Offshore Wind, a collaboration between RWE and National Grid Ventures, has proposed to New York State Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to supply New York State with clean energy from 1.3 gigawatts (GW) of new offshore wind capacity – sufficient to power approximately 500,000 homes. Red Hook has been identified as an ideal site for this offshore wind project.
More info: https://communityoffshorewind.com/

Cruise ships to connect to shore power
The lucrative cruise industry has long been a significant contributor to pollution in Red Hook. Residents and business owners in the area have expressed ongoing concerns about the pollution, traffic congestion, and economic challenges associated with the large cruise ships that dock at the Brooklyn Cruise Ship terminal. As a result, they provided testimony to The New York City Council in support of a requirement for cruise ships to utilize electric shore power. This technology, also known as cold ironing, enables ships to turn off their engines and connect to the local electrical grid, leading to a notable decrease in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
More info: https://council.nyc.gov/press/2024/03/07/2568/

NYCHA's rent miscalculation for the Red Hook Houses
After tenants of the Red Hook houses expressed concerns about the inaccuracy in rent calculations, the authorities conducted a review. Once the review was conducted, authorities noticed miscalculations in the rent of about 19% units in the Red Hook Houses.
More info: https://shorturl.at/hqCRT

Red Hook Flood Resiliency Project
The $100M Red Hook flood resiliency project has now inched closer to approval. This initiative intends to mitigate floods by implementing permanent flood walls, moveable barriers, and raised streets along the western waterfront. These measures, when combined, will elevate vulnerable waterfront areas to a 10-foot elevation during storms, significantly enhancing the neighborhood's resilience to flooding.
More info: https://www.nyc.gov/site/rhcr/index.page

Red Hook Houses receive $1.3 million FEMA grant for Sandy related repairs
13 years after Hurricane Sandy, Red Hook Houses East has received more than $1.3 million in federal funding for permanent storm-related repairs.
More info: https://shorturl.at/bwGR2

Red Hook and the NY & NJ Harbor & Tributaries Focus Area Feasibility Study (HATS)
The NYNJ HATS Proposal is a $5 billion initiative by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to address coastal storm flooding risks in the New York and New Jersey Harbor region. The primary goals include reducing flood damage, enhancing storm preparedness, and increasing overall resilience. The proposal combines infrastructural developments like levees and floodwalls with non-structural measures such as building elevation and floodplain management. The collaborative effort involves federal, state, and local agencies, emphasizing public engagement for input and feedback in decision-making. Red Hook's location along the New York City coast makes it particularly significant to the HATS Proposal.
More info: https://shorturl.at/lJP47

Community Needs & Opportunities Assessment

Oral History Workshop

In February 2024, our class conducted an oral history workshop with PortSide, featuring Red Hook community activist Wally Bazemore and Ron Shiffman, professor and urban planner. They discussed their involvement in the Red Hook 197-a Plan in the 1990s, with a focus on lessons learned for future participatory planning efforts.

Listen to the full oral history workshop on the **Red Hook Water Stories** blog:
https://redhookwaterstories.org/items/show/1978

Wally Bazemore (foreground) & Ron Shiffman during the oral history workshop. Photo by Carolina Salguero © 2024.

I used to call [Red Hook] Mayberry. It had that feel – you could leave your doors open. We got fed by everybody's parents.

The 197-A plan was extremely important. It brought a lot of community members to the table, to start planning for our needs.

There's value in face-to-face interaction. It helps with trust-building. We need more of that today.

Door knocking is highly effective… you don't knock on doors, you knock on people.

Planning is not always about what you want now. Start with what you want for your children and grandchildren, and work backwards from there.

Reconnecting Red Hook | Spring 2024

Community Needs & Opportunities Assessment
Needs, Opportunities, and Strengths in Red Hook

Needs & Opportunities

- Sustained financial and political support for nonprofit network.
- Sustained community engagement by city agencies/large landowners.
- Strengthened bonds between community groups and nonprofits.
- More public amenities and facilities (bank, transit connection, public restrooms and other parks features).
- Community education around key issues and organizing – past and present.

Strengths

- Many homegrown nonprofits and small businesses that are there for the community: *From Red Hook, for Red Hook.*
- Strong sense of place cuts across many interest groups (residents, nonprofits, small businesses).
- Schools have a strong presence and role in the community.
- Rapid mobilization in response to crisis.
- Institutional knowledge – residents and organizations that have been around for a long time.

Participatory Precedents
Existing & Past Models in Red Hook

Many of the participatory models in this toolkit have been successfully implemented in Red Hook. Below are just a few examples we learned about while working with PortSide.

Visioning Through Art
➔ **2020:** NYCHA's Red Hook Houses hosted a public art project repurposing temporary construction fencing and sidewalk sheds into murals and mixed-media art installations to improve the pedestrian experience and increase opportunities for artists.
➔ **Ongoing:** Red Hook Art Project (RHAP) provides free arts instruction to local youth, in addition to organizing community-led public arts projects.

Source: NYCHANow

Theater of the Oppressed (TO)
➔ **2010s:** The Red Hook Theater Troupe, often in collaboration with Theater of the Oppressed NYC and the The Red Hook Community Justice Center, has hosted TO-style performances around neighborhood issues.

Listening Circles
➔ **Ongoing:** The Red Hook Community Justice Center's Peacemaking Program builds on a traditional Native American approach to justice, focusing on healing and community restoration rather than punishment.

Source: The Star Review

Leadership Training
➔ **Ongoing:** PortSide identified a model similar to the Free Planning School model included in this toolkit: Red Hook Initiative's Local Leaders program. RHI provides comprehensive programming for young people in Red Hook, providing tools to inspire and support them in becoming co-creators of their community.

Source: Center for Justice Innovation

Tools for Red Hook

Tools for Red Hook

Community Engagement Models

In this section, we describe community engagement tools we believe would be useful for Red Hook. Each tool is accompanied by a case study precedent demonstrating how it can be used in practice.

Speak Out: A large, highly staffed event meant to act as a listening session on a specific topic.

Listening Benches: A designated physical space, such as a park bench, where community member can talk to each other or local leaders in a personal, informal environment.

Theater of the Oppressed: An interactive theater technique where real-world issues are worked out through performance and facilitated discussion.

Planning Free School: A space for honest discussion, collaborative learning, and skill development, giving residents tools to better participate and lead in their community.

Listening Circle: A conflict discussion group where people take turns listening and talking.

| Speak Out	Listening Benches	Theater of the Oppressed	Planning Free School

Listening Circle

Speak Out

A Speak Out is a highly staffed event meant to act as a listening session in order to really understand community members' views on specific topics. It is set up as a drop-in style event so that there can be broad participation amongst participants with varying schedules. Displays dedicated to specific issues are set up almost "science fair" style, and participants come in and speak on one or more topics given the range of options, with staff recording and asking relevant questions. The displays can take many forms, including information about a specific site design or project, survey results, past planning and outreach, and even interactive exercises. The aim is to get broad participation from a large target audience of community members with the drop-in element, branching out from the usual suspects at a town hall-style meeting.

From *SpeakOut* by Wendy Sarkissian and Wiwik Bunjamin-Mau.
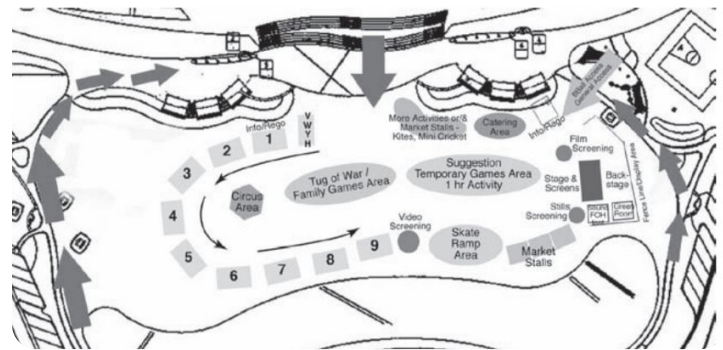
Sample venue layout. From *SpeakOut*.

Key Steps in the Process

1. Planning
   a. Engage in a research or scoping process to determine which issues should be addressed that displays will be organized around.
   b. Train trusted staff (in sufficient numbers) to facilitate, ask effective questions, and record responses.
   c. Work with staff or community members to create issue displays.
   d. Prepare the venue layout, catering, run of show, etc.
   e. Get the word out! The goal is wide participation.
2. Event Day
   a. Brief staff, set up displays, catering, and any other programming: the venue space should be activated, and the flow of activities clear to participants.
   b. Each display stall should have at least one listener and one recorder; recording can be done in many different ways, such as writing themes down on butcher paper, voting with post-it notes, traditional note-taking, or the products of interactive activities.
   c. Childcare and/or children's activities should ideally be available to allow for caretaker participation, and to involve children in the event.
   d. Other activities can be scheduled throughout the day, like presentations, dedicated workshops, or entertainment, to provide a mix of activities.
   e. Be sure to debrief with staff!
3. Using the Information Gathered: staff should convene and share what they learned, and organizers can group together themes and organize them into meaningful takeaways. These takeaways will directly inform the next steps of the planning process.

Speak Out

Things to keep in mind:

- The success of this event hinges on highly trained staff in sufficient numbers.
- Planning and preparation could take several months–the goal is a large event, with wide participation!
- Debriefing and collecting the information shared by community members is essential.
- Be sure to provide translators if the community has a population of limited-English speakers.
- In order to engage with community members that are caretakers–and with kids–provide activities that kids can participate in.
- Food is always a good idea!

Case Study: Bronx Parks Speak Up

The Bronx Parks Speak Up is a yearly speak out-style event that just had its 30th anniversary. It has accomplished a lot in its tenure, including the formation of the Bronx River Working Group (now Alliance) that has been responsible for the successful remediation and formation of open space all along the Bronx River. It has morphed into more of a conference, with presentations, panels, and workshops as the main event following the initial issue stall session. This year, much of the "speaking out" occurred in the presentation portion. It is a model of what these kind of events are capable of fostering and accomplishing by bringing voices together.

Source: Bronx Coalition of Parks and Green Spaces

Listening Benches

While the city bench sometimes symbolizes a place of respite and reflection, it can also be used as a place to strike up a conversation and make new connections. "Listening benches" are an informal yet personal way for residents to share what's on their minds and offer suggestions for how the neighborhood could be improved. Residents can meet each other or meet with members of a designated task force at locations (or benches) identified as part of the program to share ideas and talk about the community's needs and future in an informal, drop-in setting.

Awareness around this program can be raised on social media and by placing posters in public areas such as parks, senior centers, salons, and schools. The taskforce will then gather feedback that they receive from members of the community throughout the campaign or over several months, and through an additional engagement activity - perhaps another example included in this report - share the findings and discuss ways to work together to address community needs.

Case Study: Islington Borough (UK)

Source: [Islington Council](#)

Key Steps in the Process

1. Assemble a diverse task force with members from across the community of different backgrounds and ages
2. Identify benches or public locations throughout the neighborhood where task force members and residents can easily meet for quick drop-in conversations during the week. The idea is that these are locations that residents are already spending time near and don't need to go out of their way, for example near sports fields or playgrounds.
3. Taskforce members meet to discuss the feedback they are receiving at the "listening benches"
4. Taskforce members work together and with the community to develop solutions to the issues identified during listening sessions

Things to keep in mind:

- Creating a regular "listening schedule" and opportunities for residents to meet with taskforce members will be important to establish this as a reliable and convenient practice
- If the exercise is conducted outdoors as recommended, the 'campaign' should take place during spring, summer and/or fall to catch residents during the times of year they are outside the most
- This type of exercise is best used in combination with other engagement activities as this type of engagement may suit some residents more than others

Theater of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by Augusto Boal in 1960s Brazil, is a unique form of participatory theater intended to democratize decision-making and promote social change. This methodology transforms passive audiences into active participants, or "spect-actors," who engage directly in the performance to explore, debate, and find solutions to social and political issues. Central to this approach is the belief that through the act of theater, individuals can become more aware of their circumstances and the power dynamics at play, thereby fostering critical reflection and collective action.

In Forum Theatre, a classic Theater of the Oppressed technique, a play depicting a specific social issue is presented without a resolution. This incomplete conclusion is an invitation for the audience to step into the performance, propose courses of action, and directly influence potential outcomes. By encouraging spect-actors to intervene, Forum Theatre creates a space for dialogue, empowerment, and the rehearsal of real-world interventions.

Key Steps in the Process

1. Planning
   a. Community Engagement: Through outreach and engagement, identify a key issue relevant to the community.
   b. Identify Facilitators: The process will require a few facilitators trained in Theater of the Oppressed techniques.
   c. Group Formation: Assemble a group of participants (no theater experience required!) impacted by the issue. This group will become both the actors and script writers.
2. Workshops
   a. Skill Development: Conduct workshops to introduce participants to basic theater techniques, as well as the theories behind Theatre of the Oppressed.
   b. Issue Exploration: Through games, exercises, and discussions, explore the chosen issue in depth. Participants should be encouraged to share personal stories to ground the work in lived experiences.
3. Play Development
   a. Script Development: Collaboratively create a script dramatizing the issue, with a conflict that remains unresolved.
   b. Rehearsals: Rehearse the play, focusing on the portrayal of the problem and audience possible interventions.
4. Performances
   a. Public Performance: During the performance, a facilitator (referred to as the "Joker" in Forum Theatre) guides the process, inviting audience members to intervene in the play, propose solutions, and even join the stage to act out their ideas.
   b. Discussion: After the interventions, facilitate a discussion among participants and the audience. Reflect on proposed solutions, including feasibility, and other insights.
5. Action Planning:
   a. Advocacy Opportunities: How can lessons learned be translated into advocacy and, eventually, policy changes? Plan out next steps, which could include establishing working groups or coalitions around the issue.

Theater of the Oppressed

Target Audience/Participants:

Theater of the Oppressed practitioners widely believe that people who are directly impacted by the issue being explored should lead the play's development and performance. Therefore, these individuals should be the target primary actors and script writers. This means that the audience (spect-actors) – who may be less impacted by the issue at hand – have the important opportunity to be in a mediated dialogue with impacted individuals when they propose their solutions.

Audiences are often primarily made up of local residents. Because the performance is also a public art event, outreach can bring in a broad audience. Family members and friends of actors are often present at performances, fostering a supportive environment particularly crucial when working with directly-impacted individuals. Other key audience members should be advocacy groups, who can add certain expertise to the conversation. Finally, though more challenging, inviting local policy makers and elected officials and encouraging them to actively participate can be a powerful way to bridge gaps between communities and policy.

Unique Benefits:

- Centers Directly-Impacted Individuals: Giving a platform and leadership roles to those most-impacted by a given issue helps foster reparative, equity-focused solutions.
- Mediated Dialogue: Conversations around contentious topics are mediated by trained facilitators and mental health professionals through a highly collaborative, creative process.
- Doubles as Public Programming: Because they are also public art events, Forum Theater performances can be more appealing to a broader audience than a typical public meeting. Regular performances can become celebrated community events, strengthening relationships between neighbors.

Facilitation Tips:

Hire Professionals: While primary actors/script writers need no professional theater experience, these activities do require facilitators trained in Theater of the Oppressed techniques to lead the development process and guide the interactive performances. It is also important to have a mental health professional available at performances as a resource. These individuals should be paid. While this is a significant challenge, organizations like Theater of the Oppressed NYC can be a resource.

Start Small: During initial workshops, break down complex issues into more manageable parts, using playful exercises to gradually build participants' understanding and confidence. The same can be said for the play's development and performance, so diverse audiences can all have an entry-point. This process will foster inclusion and greater collaboration.

Case Study:

[Voices Unbarred](#) is a DC-based nonprofit bringing together people impacted by incarceration, theater practitioners and policy organizations to creatively reimagine the prison system and advocate for change. Through Theater of the Oppressed workshops, script writing, and Forum Theater performances, participants affected by incarceration are given a platform to share their stories, tackle complex issues, and lead the criminal justice reform movement in the DC area.

Source: Voices Unbarred

Source: Voices Unbarred

Planning Free School

The Planning Free School is a planning approach designed to democratize the planning process by directly engaging historically underrepresented and marginalized community members. Rooted in anarchistic principles, it promotes a horizontal, learner-driven approach, emphasizing critical self-reflection, capacity building, and antiracist praxis.

In the Planning Free School method, a series of community workshops are held over several weeks, perhaps months. Workshops are designed to be interactive, inclusive, and participatory, featuring a mix of issue-based discussions, critical conversations, transformative place-making sessions, and skill shares. The goal is to empower community members by prioritizing their lived experiencing, making space for unfiltered critique of current systems and practices, and providing practical tools and knowledge in order to be better set-up to engage in urban development issues.

Key Steps in the Process

1. Workshop Design
   a. Reach out to community organizations, local leaders, and residents to identify potential partners. Work with these partners to understand the Free School method, design the workshop series, ensuring it meets the community's needs and leverages local knowledge.
   b. Decide on the types of workshops (issue-based discussions, skill shares, place-making sessions) and the topics they will cover.
   c. Select facilitators who are knowledgeable, empathetic, and capable of fostering inclusive and productive discussions. Training may be needed for community members to take on facilitation roles.
2. Organize Logistics
   a. Plan ahead to find a venue that is accessible and accommodating to workshop needs. Multiple venues may be needed over the course of the series.
   b. Plan dates and times that are convenient for community members, possibly offering sessions at different times to accommodate various schedules.
   c. When promoting the series, use diverse communication channels to reach a broad audience.
3. Facilitate the Workshops
   a. Key to the Free School method is encouraging active participation. Use participatory methods to engage attendees, such as group discussions, interactive activities, and creative exercises.
   b. Throughout the series, thoroughly document discussions, ideas, and feedback.
   c. Reflect on these major takeaways, tensions, and achievements.
4. Next Steps:
   a. For individuals: Offer participants access to further learning resources, technical assistance, and opportunities to apply new skills in their community.
   b. For newly formed coalitions/groups: For participants who want to continue collaborating after the series, offer or suggest ways to do so. This could include forming ongoing working groups, planning follow-up sessions, or supporting community-led planning initiatives.

Planning Free School

Unique Benefits:

➔ **Enhanced Community Capacity:** By providing skill shares, issue-based discussions, and transformative place-making sessions, the approach builds the capacity of community members to actively engage in planning processes. Participants learn valuable skills in data collection, analysis, and advocacy, enabling them to contribute more effectively to urban development discussions and decisions.

➔ **Horizontal, Collaborative Approach:** The workshops foster collaborative environments where community members, activists, planners, and officials can come together to discuss urban issues. This collaboration encourages the sharing of ideas and resources.

➔ **Enhanced Trust and Transparency:** Through its anarchistic principles, the Planning Free School encourages participants to examine their assumptions and biases. Creating spaces for open dialogue helps build trust between community members, planners, and government officials. Though filled with challenges, this transparency is necessary for overcoming skepticism and fostering cooperative relationships in urban development.

➔ **Long-Term Community Engagement:** The workshop series approach demonstrates the value of ongoing participation in urban planning.

Things to keep in mind:

● Work with participants to establish ground rules for discussions, emphasizing respect, listening, and openness. Make sure the rules support equal participation, allowing quieter voices to be heard.
● Ensure inclusive, active participation by employing various facilitation techniques, such as icebreakers, open discussions, small group work, and interactive activities, to engage different learning styles and preferences.
● Promote critical thinking and self-reflection by asking open ended questions, without yes/no answers.
● Incorporate local examples and case studies to make abstract concepts more tangible and relevant to participants' experiences.
● Expect and manage conflict. Pay attention to group dynamics and intervene gently but firmly to redirect conversations or address conflicts.

Case Study:

The Planning Free School of Chattanooga was an experimental collaborative planning initiative launched in Chattanooga, Tennessee, aimed at engaging historically underrepresented and marginalized residents in local planning conversations and decision-making. It was initiated in response to the limitations of mainstream planning and engagement in the city.

Over five months, 52 workshops were conducted, including issue-based discussion groups, critical conversations, transformative place-making sessions, and skill shares.


Source: Courtney Knapp

Listening Circle

The Listening Circle (sometimes referred to as the Samoan Circle or Fishbowl technique) is a unique approach to addressing a contentious issue with a large group. Rather than most engagement techniques, the circle technique does not have a leader. There is a facilitator who establishes the rules, but only intervenes when necessary. Participants form two seated concentric circles, with a small group of five to six in the middle, and the rest of the participants outside the inner circle. Only the inner circle may speak.

Source: Petr's Blog

Participants that are sitting in the inner circle can stay as long as they would like, speak as much as they would like, and come and go when they like. However, anyone in the outer circle can line up behind a member of the inner circle to signal their indication to speak. The meeting can come to an end in one of three ways. First, at predetermined times empty chairs used to establish a speaking position are removed, until none are left. Second, the conversation is allowed to continue until no one has anything else to say. Third, the conversation is allowed to continue until time runs out.
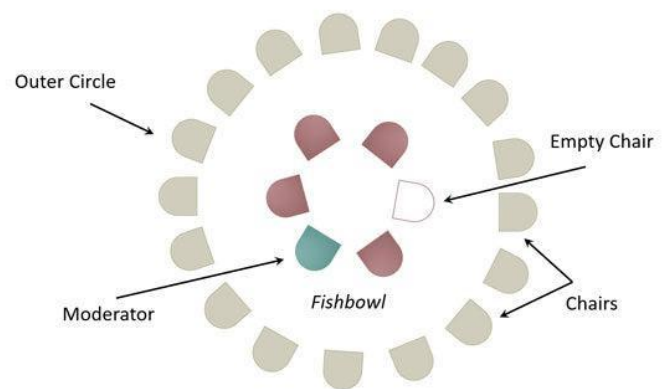
Source: Skills Converged

Key Steps in the Process

The key steps in the process are as follows:

1. The group gathers with everyone seated in the outside circle.
2. The participants enter the inner circle as desired.
3. Participants line up behind active speakers when choosing to speak.
4. The meeting adjourns in several different ways, depending on the setup of the meeting.

Things to keep in mind:

- Facilitator may need to intervene if someone dominates the circle.
- The circle doesn't necessary generate a plan of action, so it is best to consider it as part of a process rather than a complete technique.
- This technique works best when there are many participants.

Tools for PortSide

Tools for PortSide

Community Engagement Models

In this section, we describe community engagement tools we believe would be useful for PortSide specifically, informed by conversation with PortSide Executive Director Carolina Salguero. We hone in on Organizing a Working Group and a general Awareness Campaign as two particularly useful and immediate options, along with five other tools that PortSide may have capacity to undertake at various stages of an engagement process. Each tool is accompanied by a case study precedent demonstrating how it can be used in practice.

Organizing a Working Group

Awareness Campaign

Visioning Through Art

Story-Based Strategy

Community Scavenger Hunt

Polls and Surveys

City Walk

Organizing a Working Group

A working group is a dedicated group of people who come together over an extended period of time to work on a set of challenges within a given community. A working group's secondary purpose is to strengthen relationships within the group itself.

Working groups can be organized in several ways. Groups can form by being distinct entities within a given neighborhood, having a mission focused on similar outcomes, or by serving the same people. Working groups are typically made up of neighborhood organizations and associations, passionate residents, small businesses, and religious organizations. They can also include media organizations, government agencies and other groups or people as makes sense.

Ideally the working group should be planning and producing something, whether a project, series of events, material to distribute, etc. It is helpful for working groups to have one or two facilitators for scheduling, agenda setting, and other operational tasks.

Key Steps in the Process
1. Identify interested parties
   a. Ideally, this will be a wide range of organizations and people. However, they should have some common interests and be willing to work together.
2. Bring together people and organizations in the neighborhood
   a. This can be through a series of meetings or visioning sessions
3. Begin meeting regularly and creating a plan
   a. Once the lead organizer has an idea of who will be participating in the working group, they will want to start meeting regularly.
   b. The group should create a plan of action that is achievable, and will start to build momentum.
   c. Initially, the plan should be focused on the relatively short time.
4. Consider applying for funding, or hosting a fundraising event
   a. To sustain the working group, and the events of the working group, funding is helpful.
   b. Funding can be useful to support the facilitation of the group, in particular.
5. Execute planned action items or events
   a. Building off their plan, the working group should begin to host events or other actions.
   b. Utilize a multi-channel outreach strategy, likely involving a combination of digital and traditional means. While messaging and design should be uniform across channels, identify the differing strengths of each and utilize accordingly.
6. Reflect on what has been accomplished and plan again
   a. Based on how the events have gone, the regular working group meetings will be crucial for adjusting how the work is being done.
   b. Once several actions or events have been completed, the group should begin to plan again, in order to build off the momentum. Each time this is completed, the plan should have short term, and longer term goals.

Organizing a Working Group

Target Audience/Participants:

Community based organizations, community members, small businesses, and identified allies.

Potential Benefits or Outcomes:

- Improved cohesion: a working group builds trust between members and helps to spread news.
- Enhanced Engagement: When a working group or coalition is behind a series of actions or events, their consistency helps to build relationships with the community and improve engagement.

Things to keep in mind:

- Facilitation: Make sure there are one or two dedicated people who are supported to facilitate the group. They will be organizing, planning, executing and keeping everything running smoothly.
- Outreach: Sometimes the best strategy is to doorknock and distribute fliers.
- Documentation and promotion: It is a good practice to document all work the working group is doing, in order to promote the work, raise funds and awareness, and record history.

Case Study: The East Side Freedom Library's Housing Justice Working Group

In 2019, hundreds of people and dozens of community organizations from Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota were brought together through a series of events hosted by the East Side Freedom Library (ESFL). The events focused on housing justice, with a particular focus on the East side of Saint Paul, an area that has a dynamic history of indigenous peoples, unionized European-descended workers, and recent refugees from Southeast Asia and East Africa. As the event series concluded, a group of roughly eight community organizations and small businesses began meeting regularly as a working group. Together, the working group began to host further events, educational classes and develop a dedicated program that evolved into a program with two full time staff members. The program was then partially overseen and directed by the working group.

Awareness Campaign

An awareness campaign is a strategic effort designed to inform, educate, and engage the public about a specific cause, issue, or, more generally, about a nonprofit organization itself. These campaigns aim to raise visibility, spread information, and mobilize support among a wide audience, which can include potential donors, volunteers, and advocates. The ultimate goal of an awareness campaign can vary, but often includes raising funds, influencing public policy, encouraging behavior change, or increasing the nonprofit's visibility and impact. PortSide could therefore organize an awareness campaign for a variety of purposes.

Key components of an effective awareness campaign include defining a clear objective and target audience, crafting a compelling message, deploying a multi-channel outreach approach, and consistent evaluation to determine impact and re-strategize as needed.

Key Steps in the Process
1. Define goals and audience:
   a. What do you want to achieve with the campaign? Goals should be specific, measurable, feasible, and time-sensitive. This could range from raising awareness about a specific issue, increasing donations, recruiting volunteers, or advocating for policy change. Define target audiences accordingly, keeping these individuals in mind when planning communications.
2. Create a timeline
   a. Although not a necessity, an organization may choose to align their awareness campaigns with established national awareness months or days (i.e. Women's History Month or Giving Tuesday) to leverage existing public awareness. Regardless, campaigns should have an established timeline to ensure strong, targeted messaging and to establish goalposts.
3. Develop campaign messaging and calls to action
   a. Reflect on the organization's mission, immediate community needs, and (if applicable) the themes of the aligning national month/day. Determine any actionable steps that can be taken and include this in messaging.
4. Outreach
   a. Utilize a multi-channel outreach strategy, likely involving a combination of digital and traditional means. While messaging and design should be uniform across channels, identify the differing strengths of each and utilize accordingly.
   b. Mobilize a team of volunteers and partners to promote the campaign.
5. Consider hosting a campaign event
   a. The campaign may gain traction through either a kick-off or culminating community event.
6. Share successes, evaluate campaign, and adapt for next steps
   a. While the campaign is happening, report out any successes (major donations, petition signatures, organizing efforts, etc.) to increase momentum
   b. Use analytics tools to monitor the performance of your campaign in real-time. Track metrics related to your goals, such as website traffic, social media engagement, donation levels, and event attendance. This way, you can adapt your strategy based on what's working and what's not.

Awareness Campaign

Things To Keep In Mind

- **Highlight Previous Accomplishments and Resurface Archival Materials:** Though your awareness campaign may be focused on a new issue or goal, highlighting your organization's legacy of work in the community is a great thing to integrate into your messaging. This helps solidify your organization's role in the community and capacity for making change. For PortSide, this could include Sandy recovery efforts and the business plan development. For creative and illustrative content, consider including archival photos, videos, and audio recordings.
- **Create Opportunities for Engagement:** Allowing people to create birthday fundraisers, participate in challenges, or share their own stories ensures the campaign goes beyond one-way communications.
- **Graphic Design is Important:** Spend tIme on creating appealing, consistent visuals. Use high-quality images, videos, and graphics that align with the organization's mission and appeal to a wide audience. Compelling visual content is more likely to be shared, extending your reach.
- **Make Shareable Templates:** Create templates with language that people can easily use to post on social media or write to their representatives.
- **Ensure Transparency:** Build trust with your audience by being clear about how contributions (time, money, advocacy) are being used to advance the cause.

Case Study

The Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition often employs awareness campaigns to spread information and encourage local participation in specific advocacy issues affecting the community, such as health, housing, and environmental justice topics. They are skilled at both effective social media/online messaging and in-person outreach to galvanize broad, intergenerational support.

The organization has carried out an ongoing awareness campaign around the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory, with a focus on a redevelopment plan that drives economic opportunities for the community without displacing current residents. Some major wins that have come out of their campaigning include: securing $31 million in building renovations; getting the City Council to vote NO on a proposed poverty-wage mall backed by the Mayor; and negotiating a groundbreaking Community Benefits Agreement for living wages, local hire, and shared revenue and space for the community at the Armory.
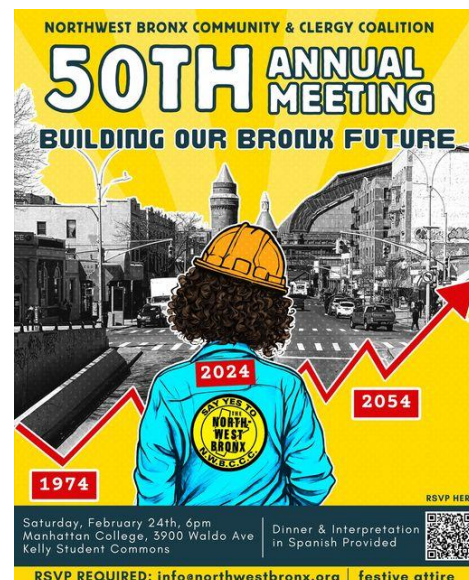
Source: Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition

Visioning Through Art

Public art allows for varied participation, including public engagement in planning, selection, creation, installation, maintenance and collective appreciation. Participatory public art reflects neighborhood identity, culture and history, and creating art together makes it possible to simultaneously identify and communicate personal narratives and build community cohesion.

Muraling is one example of an art that can be generated, created and appreciated by a diverse group - and which through its existence in the public realm, reminds the community of the vision they agreed to and are working towards. But muraling is not the only way to create a community vision through art.

Creative tools include innovative visual-art techniques, storytelling, social-networking technology, exhibits, music, performance, festivals, and community gatherings.

Case Study: Maps on Purpose

Baltimore's Maps on Purpose exhibit included paintings and models prepared by the community, with the goal of catalyzing civic engagement through art making and programming. The group conducted workshops with artists and neighborhood representatives in 23 Baltimore neighborhoods and developed a model for people to come together and, using paint and GPS technology, create maps that define and explore the experiences of multiple residents of a place. To do this, residents mapped traveling paths, favorite locations, and places in need of improvement.

Source: Walters Art Museum; Brunn Studios

Key Steps in the Process: *Creating a Community Mural*

1. Identify funding for art materials
2. Identify potential sites for the mural prior to community engagement
3. Engage people from various age groups and sectors of the community to raise awareness around the project
4. Schedule public meetings related to the community art project at schools, senior centers, salons, local shops and restaurants
5. Provide prompts to help inspire discussion and excitement about the possibility of creating something as a community
6. Invite community to choose location from a prepared list of potential sites
7. Engage local artists to create/complete the mural
8. Plan a celebration around the mural's completion
9. Capitalize on the momentum and existing community engagement fostered during the development of the mural to set and achieve community goals

Story-Based Strategy

Story-Based Strategy is a framework that integrates core principles from organizing, communications, narrative, and culture, and has successfully been used by grassroots movements for over 20 years. The framework helps organizers and communities understand the stories they are trying to change, while being intentional and strategic about how those stories are told.

The story would be crafted by a community organization dedicated to finding Red Hook's voice. The output of this exercise is a story that:

➔ Clearly articulates the conflict folks in Red Hook are experiencing today
➔ Includes real characters; people who residents know, relate to or or recognize.
➔ Uses vivid and relevant language that makes people feel something
➔ Foreshadows the desired outcome of the community's united efforts; offering hints about next steps in the movement
➔ Makes the correct underlying assumptions about what people think and feel, without needing to express it outright in the message
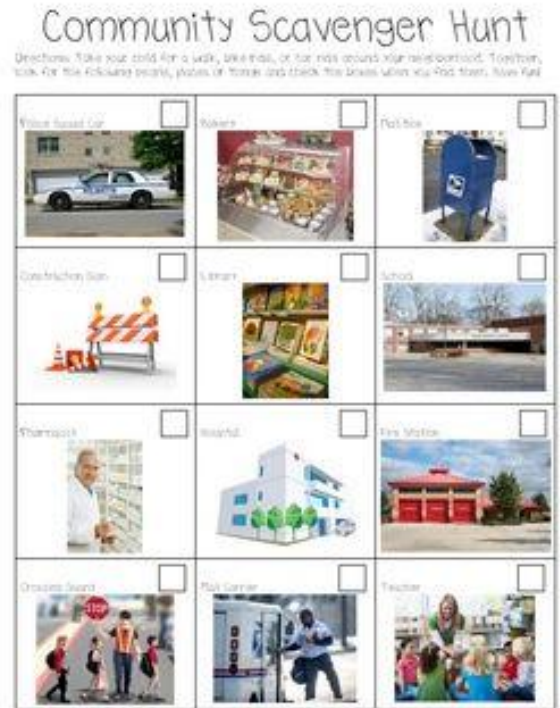

Source: CBC

Key Steps in the Process

1. Determine the key conflict that the community is facing
2. Think about the characters that the community already knows or who they may need to be introduced to in order to rally around the cause presented
3. Decide what foreshadowing – positive or negative – will motivate people to get involved
4. Choose WHERE to intervene, e.g. at PortSide, in local stores, at the cruise ship terminal, etc.
5. Decide how to intervene in the conflict identified, in a way that strengthens the community's argument and improves Red Hook's position to get what it wants and needs (in other words, be strategic about how, when and where to activate)

Community Scavenger Hunt

A fun way to encourage community engagement and connection is through community scavenger hunts. Community scavenger hunts have the potential to raise awareness and appreciation of a community's unique characteristics by showcasing nearby businesses, landmarks, and historical locations. Furthermore, scavenger searches encourage exploration because, in order to complete tasks, participants are required to travel to different locations within the neighborhood. Participants may feel more adventurous and curious as a result of learning about new locations and activities. They can be made to fit a range of requirements, so that everyone can take part and have fun.

Scavenger hunts around the neighborhood can either help people relive old memories or learn new facts about their community. This will make it easier for individuals to comprehend and relate to present-day issues.

Source: Center for Family Resources

Key Steps in the Process

1. Plan the Hunt
   a. Choose the scavenger hunt format: Digital Scavenger Hunt, Physical Scavenger Hunt
   b. Decide on the hunt's location, parameters, length, and schedule.
2. Create Clues or Tasks
   a. Develop a list of clues, tasks, or challenges that participants will need to complete to advance in the scavenger hunt.
   b. Make sure the clues are clear and provide enough information to help participants find the next location or complete the task.
3. Prepare Materials
   a. Gather any materials or supplies that will be needed for the scavenger hunt, such as maps, clue sheets, pens, or digital devices.
4. Recruit Volunteers
   a. Enlist volunteers to help organize and run the scavenger hunt.
   b. Volunteers can assist with registration, explain the rules to participants, and monitor the progress of the hunt.
5. Promote the Event
   a. Publicize the scavenger hunt through various channels to attract participants.
   b. Use social media, flyers, and community newsletters to spread the word and generate interest.

(Continued on next page)

Community Scavenger Hunt

6. Host the Scavenger Hunt
   a.   On the day of the event, set up a registration area where participants can check in and receive their clue sheets or digital devices. Briefly explain the rules and guidelines before the hunt begins.
7. Monitor the Hunt
   a.   Throughout the scavenger hunt, have volunteers stationed at key locations to help guide participants and ensure that the event runs smoothly. Keep track of the progress of each team or participant.
8. Wrap Up the Event
   a.   Once the scavenger hunt is completed, gather participants for a debriefing session. Share highlights from the event, announce any winners or prizes, and thank everyone for participating.

Things to keep in mind:

- The preparation of this event can be time consuming and will need volunteers to prepare for the event right from the planning stage.
- The materials required to carry out the scavenger hunt would need be funded by the community organization or local businesses hosting it.
- Volunteers will need to be stationed around the neighborhood to answer questions and guide lost or confused participants.
- Providing snacks and drinks at the end of the event will be a good way to end the scavenger hunt.

Case Study: Stay Project Community Mapping Scavenger Hunt

The STAY Project's community mapping scavenger hunt provides a unique opportunity for individuals to deeply explore and understand their community. Adapted from the Highlander Center's "Mapping Our Futures" curriculum, this scavenger hunt aims to familiarize participants with their community and encourage them to share their experiences. Whether participants choose to form a team or go solo, they will have the chance to engage with thought-provoking questions and take part in creative activities at various locations. From identifying decision-making venues to discovering spaces of celebration and healing, this scavenger hunt encourages participants to see their community from a new perspective.

By sharing their findings on social media or through the STAY Project Scavenger Hunt Google Form, participants contribute to a wider understanding of their community's dynamics and challenges. There are no strict guidelines for this scavenger hunt, allowing participants to let their imagination and curiosity guide them as they explore their community and its potential for positive change.

Source: Stay Project

Polls and Surveys

Polls and surveys can serve as valuable tools for quantitatively assessing community viewpoints, specifically because of their cost-effectiveness and their ability to gather data from large swaths of the population. Polls are typically less time-consuming and consist of a series of objective questions asked in a set order. Surveys tend to be longer and consist of a number of open-ended questions that may elicit more information from the respondent. As such, organizers should choose the methodology that best suits their objectives.

The primary strength of polls and surveys is their ability to comprehensively measure public opinion by engaging people who may not be intimately involved in a public participation process. However, the objectivity of polls and surveys can be compromised if they are not formulated and implemented carefully. Organizers should be extremely careful that there are no biases reflected in the questions in polls and surveys, and should ensure that the population sample answering the questions is appropriately diverse. If implemented correctly, polls and surveys can provide a comprehensive snapshot of a community's attitudes toward present challenges and opportunities.

Key Steps in the Process

1. Determine Target Population and Objectives (1 month)
    a. Articulate the objectives of the survey: What information is needed from the community? What attitudes need to be assessed?
    b. Define the target population that will complete the poll or survey: Will it be random or focused? Are they residents or those employed in the neighborhood? What demographics should be engaged? Why?
2. Design the Poll/Survey (1 month)
    a. Identify which methodology best suits the determined objectives. Determine how long the poll/survey period will last
    b. Determine how the poll/survey will be conducted and distributed: will it be conducted in-person? Over the phone? Online?
    c. Develop unbiased questions that align with the research objectives, ensuring that such questions are sequenced appropriately
3. Launch the Poll/Survey
    a. Monitor the collection of results and ensure that any issues related to data collection are addressed
4. Data Cleaning and Analysis of Results (3 weeks)
    a. Organize the collected data
    b. Identify patterns and trends within the data, specifically as they relate to respondents' demographics and positionalities.
    c. Compile findings

Polls and Surveys

Things to keep in mind:

- Consider hiring outside experts to develop questions and oversee data collection
- Test questions to ensure they are unbiased and will elicit objective responses
- Remember that polls and surveys provide a snapshot of public opinion at a particular moment in time – opinions can change rapidly, especially in neighborhoods undergoing significant change
- Privacy of poll and survey respondents is of the utmost importance

An advertisement for a survey used to support the development of a comprehensive plan in Glenn Cove, New York

Case Study:

In 2022, New York City announced an initiative to reimagine Fifth Avenue to support pedestrians, cyclists, and mass transit through public realm improvements. To kick off the community engagement and visioning process the partnership in charge of the initiative, *Future of Fifth*, launched a website and public survey for New York City residents and visitors.
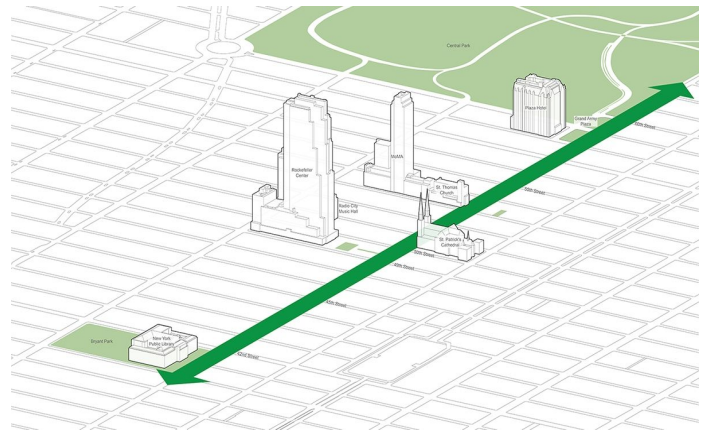
Source: Future of Fifth

City Walk

A City Walk offers community leaders a unique opportunity to re-experience their neighborhood through focused observation. Organizers behind this engagement strategy select sites within a neighborhood that illustrate challenges and opportunities documented by residents, then direct participants to identified sites. Participants are provided with a set of instructions detailing various ways they should engage with selected sites, and are asked to take notes on their observations. For example, participants may be directed to a public park in need of renovation, and be asked to sit and take note of how people interact with the existing landscape: Are visitors engaging in active or passive forms of recreation? Where is activity occurring? How diverse are the park's users? After documenting their observations, participants reconvene and discuss their experiences.

The strength of this engagement precedent lies in its potential to shed new light on aspects of a neighborhood that participants are already accustomed to. People who routinely work day-in and day-out within their communities may become inured to existing challenges, or take certain amenities and opportunities for granted. Through its focused prompts, a City Walk can provide community leaders with opportunities to examine previously overlooked elements of their neighborhood in minute detail.

Source: City of Providence, Rhode Island

Source: University of Buffalo

Key Steps in the Process

1. Planning (1+ month)
   a. Identify participants: reach out to people who are already deeply familiar with the community through their work and/or activism
   b. Determine sites: drawing upon existing engagement to identify locations that are representative of broader community challenges and opportunities
   c. Develop prompts: formulate instructions that detail how participant should interact with selected sites
2. City Walk (2 weeks)
   a. Kickoff meeting: gather participants, explain the purpose of the City Walk, and distribute selected sites and prompts
   b. Observation period: provide participants with ample time to conduct site visits and synthesize their observations and findings.
3. Final Workshop(s) (1 week)
   a. Gather participants to discuss findings and potential revelations
   b. Develop planning recommendations

City Walk

Things to keep in mind:

- Ensure participants are well-acquainted with the process of the City Walk and the desired outcomes.
- Formulate prompts in a way that specifies how participants should interact with a site objectively. Do not suggest that participants should be overly-critical or appreciative of a certain site.
- Incorporate structured activities into the final workshops to effectively solicit feedback and foster productive dialogue.

Case Study:

Urban Design Lab is a unique platform for Urbanists, Architects, Designers and Planners to share their working methods, acquire additional skills, and explore new avenues of urban environments. A recently published article details the usefulness of activity mapping as a methodology to understand how people utilize their existing environment. Activity mapping could be incorporated into a City Walk's instructions to help participants examine activity within their neighborhoods in new ways. An example survey used for activity mapping is below, along with a toolkit for examining public space published by Gehl, a people-centric urban design firm.
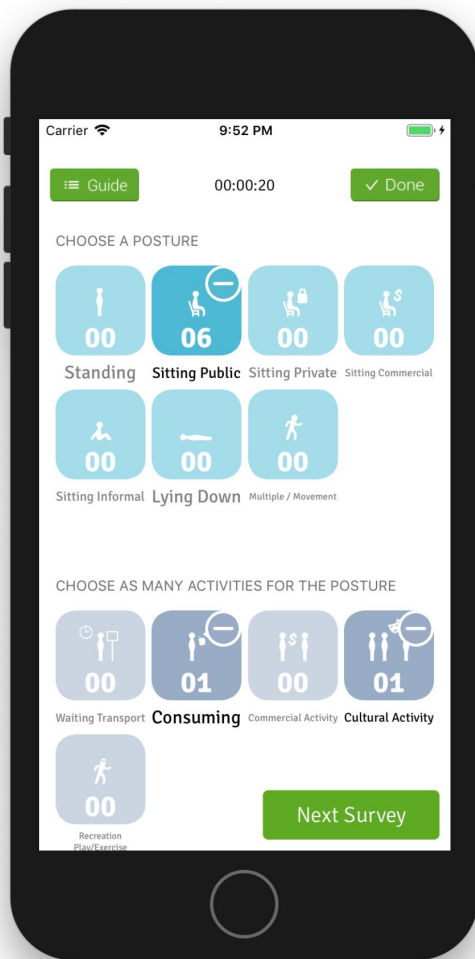
Source: Counterpoint App
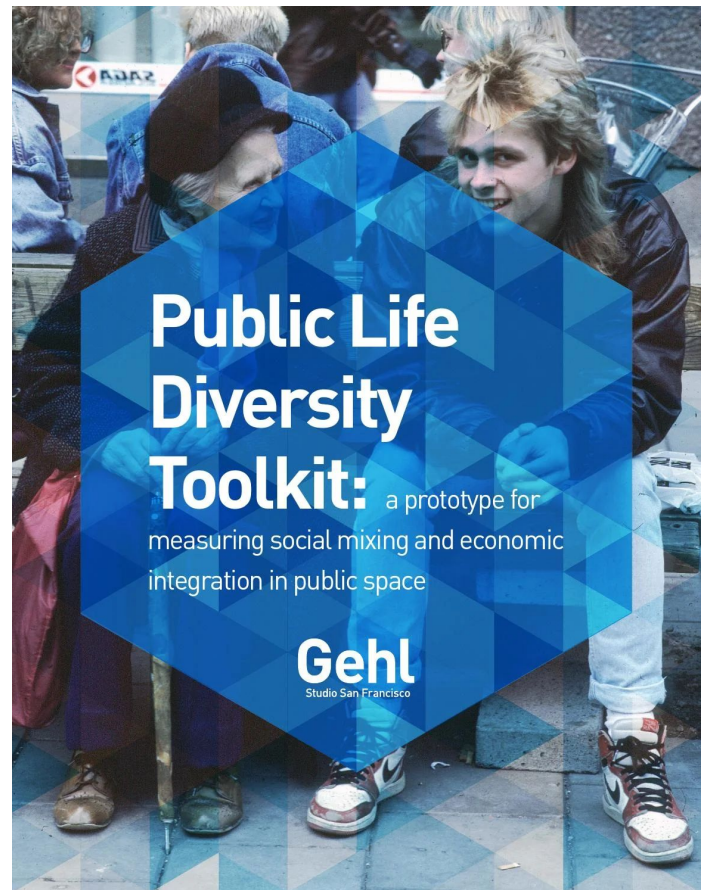
Source: Gehl

Conclusion

Conclusion & Key Takeaways

- Large scale organizing has been successful in Red Hook.

- In the past, multiple internal traumatic events galvanized the community. Now, external events are having the same impact.

- The community remains under-resourced, however, a united Red Hook is vital to the community's future.

- The Red Hook 197-a Plan showed that community participation and planning works.

Photo by Carolina Salguero, PortSide

Appendix

References

Awareness Campaign

- Nonprofit Awareness Campaigns Guide: Steps, Tips, & Examples. Getting Attention.
  https://gettingattention.org/nonprofit-awareness-campaigns/

City Walk

- Creighton, J. L. (2005). *The public participation handbook : making better decisions through citizen involvement*. Jossey-Bass.

Community Scavenger Hunt

- *How to host a neighborhood Scavenger Hunt*. ScavengerHunt.com -Discover. (2021, December 8). https://www.scavengerhunt.com/discover/neighborhood-scavenger-hunt/
- Project, S. (2021, July 21). *Stay project community mapping scavenger hunt*. The Stay Project. https://www.thestayproject.net/news-and-updates/scavengerhunt

Free Planning School

- Knapp, C. E. (2017). Experimenting with anarchistic approaches to collaborative planning: The Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Journal of Urban Affairs, 39(5), 635–657. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2017.1305767

Listening Circle

- Listening circle facilitator's guide. Word Press. (n.d.). https://americanvaluesare.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/listening-circle-facilitators-guide.pdf

Polls and Surveys

- Creighton, J. L. (2005). *The public participation handbook : making better decisions through citizen involvement*. Jossey-Bass.

Speak Out
- Sarkissian, W., and Bunjamin-Mao, W. (2012). *SpeakOut: The Step-by-Step Guide to SpeakOuts and Community Planning.* Hoboken, NJ: EarthScan.
- Bronx Parks Speak Up – The Bronx Coalition of Parks and Green Spaces. February 24, 2024. https://www.bronxspeakup.org/

Theater of the Oppressed
- Forum Theatre – Participedia. (n.d.). https://participedia.net/method/149
- Theatre of the Oppressed – ImaginAction.org. (n.d.). https://imaginaction.org/media/our-methods/theatre-of-the-oppressed-2/

References

Story-Based Strategy

- Center for Story-Based Strategy. https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/what-is-storybased-strategy

Visioning Through Art

- American Planning Association. How Arts and Cultural Strategies Enhance Community Engagement and Participation. March, 2011. https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9148000/