

REBUILD BY DESIGN

OAKLAND | REBUILD BY DESIGN

Working with City agencies and communities, we identified and developed key principles of effective community engagement.

Background:

Every year, the City of Oakland engages with its residents on a variety of issues from large scale neighborhood redevelopment to changing public policies. Public interest groups expect for the City to work in conjunction with residents to address these issues as they arise. These organizations often serve as intermediaries between government and communities for large-scale processes or big policy decisions, acting as educators, organizers, facilitators and enablers. However, these same organizations can also become frustrated with City engagement practices, without the resources or opportunity for improvement.

To develop better means of effective engagement, and as part of 100 Resilient Cities, the City of Oakland's Resilience Office wanted a deeper understanding of how they could improve their practice and build trust between the municipality and local organizations. In order to address this challenge, Rebuild by Design, worked with the City of Oakland to identify key partners for collaboratively developing a process that demonstrates participatory engagement and builds credibility from the onset. The West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project and Streetwyze were invited to join, and together the partners embarked upon a three part workshop series to understand how the City could better engage with Oakland residents.



ABOVE: Margaret Gordon of West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, and Emi Wang, Greening Institute.



ABOVE: Panel discussion with City partners and community organizations.

Rebuild by Design Method of Research and Design:

In order to devise a recommendation of how to engage better, historical challenges had to be uncovered, and a shared understanding of what "good engagement" looks like from both the City and community perspectives needed to be reached.

The research stage began with a survey for municipal agencies within the city. This seminar focused on the ways in which government interacts with community groups. Respondents were asked about the technology utilized in community engagement, how often interactions take place, why they engage with community groups, and if they have the tools needed- including staff, expertise and knowledge of the community and partners- for successful engagement.

That data was used to inform the program for the first workshop which focused on enabling a shared understanding of what successful engagement means from both the city government and community perspective. Community organizations and city agency representatives each presented examples of successful community engagement to one another. This created an open conversation about the struggles each experience during unsuccessful City engagement processes, and giving each

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other an understanding of their expectations and constraints. Presentations were followed by small conversations which focused on understanding how and why certain actions within those engagements made the effort successful. In the second workshop, participants collectively created principles derived from the examples of successful examples in order to understand how to replicate this success.

In collaboration with over 55 city leaders and local organizations ten principles were developed for future engagements. The third workshop focused on testing these principles by applying them

Impact:

The ten principles created from this process have been integrated into the City of Oakland's ongoing efforts to better engage with community organizations. The principles were integrated into the City's Sea Level Rise Roadmap, released shortly after this process. The roadmap was created to identify physical vulnerabilities to future risks in order to develop adaptation strategies.

The principles were also included in the Bay Area Resilient by Design Challenge, a regional effort to address long-term physical and social vulnerabilities.

The outputs from this workshop series laid the groundwork for how the City engages the community on service design through Oakland's newly formed Civic Design Lab, which was created to make public service as effective and accessible as possible.

10 Principles for Engagement:

- Mobilize talent
- Diversify outreach
- Improve accessibility
- Know the history
- Foster a safe space
- Ensure equity
- Set expectations
- Create transparency
- Define success
- Institutionalize

[Click here for more information.](#)



LEFT: Amy Chester of Rebuild by Design presents at first workshop to multi-sector stakeholders of community members.



LEFT Notes from workshops defining who is part of the community and components of successful community engagement.

About Rebuild by Design:

Rebuild by Design convenes a mix of sectors - including government, business, nonprofit, and community organizations - to gain a better understanding of how overlapping environmental and human-made vulnerabilities leave cities and regions at risk. Our process entails true public private partnerships where entities or institutions are needed to establish a meaningful resilience coalition to understand the specific needs in a city, and design evidence-based solutions for the community you are working with. This collaboration remains at the heart of an iterative creative process to address the intersection of physical social, and ecological resilience to drive lasting change.

If you would like more information about Rebuild by Design email info@rebuildbydesign.org.
For more information about Resilient Oakland visit beta.oaklandca.gov/issues/resilientoakland.