CONVERSATIONS TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE PRACTICE

24 June 2019 / Engaging Communities

COMMON THEMES

- Engage early, know who is THE COMMUNITY, learn to communicate ideas in non-architectural language

- Ensure everyone is heard, not just loud voices

- Tools for community engagement process still in process of development in a lot of firms

- Integration of community engagement into design process, not considering it an additional step in the process

- Community engagement benefits the projects, as well as gives communities the sense of ownership

NOTES BY GROUP

Group 1:

- Different firm experiences, some offices wanting to do more

- Engagement through design review feels passive, feedback is coming too late

  - o Public event for multiple design firms to work on design prompt while community members can observe and ask questions

  - o Helps give public tools and open eyes to the design process

- Engagement can be a way to invest community in projects

- Public knowledge on design/ architecture varies, but their knowledge of their community is their expertise and should be utilized

  - o Personal resource vs. google

- Explaining vs. questioning (assume we are the experts)

  - o Resources: surveys, personal questionnaires, tools from Pomegranate Center

  - o Other tools: photo sharing to start a dialogue

- o Make sure to ask the right questions to get the desired feedback
- Community Engagement as part of the office culture
  - o Creates space for coworkers to share engagement outside of the office
  - o Allows mutual learning from coworkers
  - o Brings awareness of others' skills/ limitations and creates a safe space to ask questions
- Need to be willing to invest in others' perspectives and needs
- Having Community Engagement as a requirement is a helpful first step
- There is disconnect between engaging client group/ end user and engaging with surrounding community that is impacted by the project
  - o Cultural appropriation

Group 2:
- Direct (ex. Reuse projects, housing) vs. mediated engagement (ex. Government work, retail)
- HOW projects happen is KEY
  - o "Checking the box"- get some sign-in sheets, hold a panel, one & done
  - o REAL- "Call and response" approach, continued engagement- not one time, iterative conversation
  - o What projects should require community engagement
  - o How do you find the community to engage? Figuring out WHO is the community is the key to success.
  - o Many diverse communities can be engaged online (ex. Key Arena- neighbors, City, fans, artists, etc.)
- Managing scope/ schedule
  - o Developers want to move quickly
  - o Stakeholders may lack time
  - o Language- development vs. vernacular
  - o Perception- renderings & sales market vs. real use
  - o More openness at start, more room for conversation
- Strategies:
  - o Find events people will engage with
  - o Have conceptual conversation (not site specific) to "open the door"

- o   Come with open mind, not prepared; come to listen not to present

  - o   Come with humility

  - o   Imagery used should be of *mood* not the project

  - o   First impressions count- graphic clarity is key for clear communication

  - o   Design <u>with</u> community

  - o   Diverse design team comes with inherent cultural resources

- Valve

  - o   Mitigate risk of project being blocked or getting bad PR

  - o   City of Seattle has community engagement requirements, so architect can manage the discussion

  - o   Some clients engage on their own

  - o   Make any mandated engagement work

  - o   Find opportunities to give more than performa called for

  - o   Ensure you hear from right/ all/ diverse community members at engagement meetings (some voices can be overpowering, so help others be heard)

- Strategies for success

  - o   Account for privilege in speaking priority

Group 4:
- How to draw positive aspects/ feedback out of angry individuals
- Use of post-its and sticker dots helpful for obtaining useful information
- Provide various ways of engagement- visual, verbal, written
- Surveys- often result in low participation; there is an art to writing a good survey
- Use neutral moderator
- Bring food/ raffle
- Create community forums
- Job shadow a worker- find out how they use a building
- Find interpreters if needed
- Can't do design by committee- setting boundaries
- Emphasize and also explain
- Repeat back the words you hear from community

Group 5:

- Participating in community events:
    - Should the participation of the firm [members] be an organized event; billable time allocated for staff
    - Opportunities for staff to take time off and make it up later vs. get paid for community time
    - Firm efforts in communities:
        - Sawhorse Revolution
        - Block Project
        - Various school committees
- Type of project often dictates community engagement efforts; market rate housing project often skip or approach it as a "check box" item
- Consider the fact that community engagement contributes to better projects, community has a sense of ownership
- Architects should educate developers as well as integrate community engagement into their design process, so it is not an item that can be taken out of the scope
- Keep dialog with community going; learn to speak "non-architect" language to make your efforts more understandable
- How does community engagement benefit development of ones' career; is it reflected in the careers of leaders within the firm?
    - The most successful examples were of leading efforts "top-down" and recognitions of staff efforts in front of the whole firm

Group 6:

- Engagement:
    - Door to door
    - Through neighborhood leaders
    - Community center meetings
    - P-patch (telephone, postcard, farmers market)
    - Flyers
- Need "A Dick" (designer) and "A Rick" (neighborhood program)
    - Designer (vision)- facilitator, resources, codes, vendors, leader

- - Neighborhood interests- listener, diverse representation
- Process- public/ private
  - RFP- goals/ steakholders/ leaders/ responsible
  - Listening opportunities- allow everyone a voice, not just squeaky wheel
- Tools
  - Firm can bring a bucket of tools
  - Time is tight for volunteers
  - Document/ keep record of work
  - Funding- Sparks Fund matching, City of Seattle $5k seed money (must have 50% voluneers in organization)

Group 7:

- Barriers and challenges faced:
  - Levels of bureaucracy (governmental, administrative)
  - Cultural distrust/ history (lack of) consultation and respect
  - How to actively build trust among users
  - Disparity; lack of empowerment of marginalized communities
  - Understanding of policies and who makes decisions
  - Scheduling events around availability of the community
  - City of Seattle red tape- being connected to the right policy makers in order to make change
- Office/ workplace attitude towards community engagement
  - Project dependent- sometimes client driven or citizen driven
  - Positive (that is a requirement by the city) and passionately driven by (typically younger) staff
  - Post occupancy surveys feel like "pat on the back" but there is value in feedback which is then inspiring to young designers
  - Pluses and minuses replaced by pluses and deltas- indicate possibilities for improvement (rather than negative aspects)
- Formal tools used by offices
  - Often "winging it"
  - There is a desire to be trained by outside consultants
  - Approach of "showing up to raise awareness"

THANK YOU FROM YOUR SESSION LEADERS

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